

Official Report of the
One Hundred Seventy-eighth
Semiannual General

CONFERENCE

of The Church of Jesus Christ
of Latter-day Saints

held in the Conference Center
Salt Lake City, Utah

October 4 and 5, 2008

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Published by
The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints
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Report of the 178th Semiannual General Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints

The 178th Semiannual General Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints convened in the Conference Center in Salt Lake City, Utah, on Saturday, October 4, 2008, at 10:00 a.m.

The general sessions of the conference were held at 10:00 a.m. and 2:00 p.m. on Saturday and Sunday, October 4 and 5, 2008. The general priesthood session was held on Saturday, October 4, at 6:00 p.m.

President Thomas S. Monson presided at all sessions of the conference. He conducted the Saturday morning, priesthood, and Sunday morning sessions. President Henry B. Eyring conducted the Saturday afternoon session, and President Dieter F. Uchtdorf conducted the Sunday afternoon session.

The conference was carried by satellite transmission to thousands of Church buildings in many countries. In areas that did not receive this transmission, video recordings of the conference were made available. In addition, television and radio stations carried portions or all of the general sessions to large audiences throughout North America. The proceedings were also broadcast live over the Internet.

General Authorities

First Presidency: Thomas S. Monson, Henry B. Eyring, and Dieter F. Uchtdorf

Quorum of the Twelve Apostles: Boyd K. Packer, L. Tom Perry, Russell M. Nelson, Dallin H. Oaks, M. Russell Ballard, Joseph B. Wirthlin, Richard G. Scott, Robert D. Hales, Jeffrey R. Holland, David A. Bednar, Quentin L. Cook, and D. Todd Christofferson

Presidency of the Seventy: Neil L. Andersen, Ronald A. Rasband, Claudio R. M. Costa, Steven E. Snow, Walter F. González, L. Whitney Clayton, and Jay E. Jensen

First Quorum of the Seventy: Marcos A. Aidukaitis, Carlos H. Amado, David S. Baxter, Shayne M. Bowen, Gérald Caussé, Craig C. Christensen, Gary J. Coleman, Spencer J. Condie, Lawrence E. Corbridge, Benjamín De Hoyos, John B. Dickson, Charles Didier, David F. Evans, Enrique R. Falabella, Eduardo Gavarret, Carlos A. Godoy, Christoffel Golden Jr., C. Scott Grow, Bruce C. Hafen, Donald L. Hallstrom, James J. Hamula, Keith K. Hilbig, Richard G. Hinckley, Marlin K. Jensen, Daniel L. Johnson, Kenneth Johnson, Paul V. Johnson, Yoshihiko Kikuchi, Paul E. Koelliker, Erich W. Kopischke, John M. Madsen, Richard J. Maynes, Lynn A. Mickelsen, Marcus B. Nash, Dennis B. Neuenschwander, Glenn L. Pace, Allan F. Packer, Kevin W. Pearson, Anthony D. Perkins, Paul B. Pieper, Rafael E. Pino, Bruce D. Porter, Carl B. Pratt, Lynn G. Robbins, Cecil O. Samuelson Jr., Ulisses Soares, Gary E. Stevenson, Michael John U. Teh, José A. Teixeira, Octaviano Tenorio, Francisco J. Viñas, William R. Walker, F. Michael Watson, Lance B. Wickman, Jorge F. Zeballos, Claudio D. Zivic, and W. Craig Zwick

Second Quorum of the Seventy: Mervyn B. Arnold, Douglas L. Callister, Tad R. Callister, Craig A. Cardon, Shirley D. Christensen, Don R. Clarke, James M. Dunn, Keith R. Edwards, Stanley G. Ellis, Daryl H. Garn, Larry W. Gibbons, Spencer V. Jones, Won Yong Ko, Clate W. Mask Jr., Robert C. Oaks, William W. Parmley, Wolfgang H. Paul, W. Douglas Shumway, Lowell M. Snow, Paul K. Sybrowsky, Kent D. Watson, and Robert S. Wood

Presiding Bishopric: H. David Burton, Richard C. Edgley, and Keith B. McMullin

SATURDAY MORNING SESSION

The first session of the 178th Semi-annual General Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints convened in the Conference Center in Salt Lake City, Utah, at 10:00 a.m. on Saturday, October 4, 2008. President Thomas S. Monson conducted this session.

Music was provided by the Tabernacle Choir, directed by Mack Wilberg and Ed Thompson, with Clay Christiansen and Andrew Unsworth as the organists. To begin this session, the choir sang “High on the Mountain Top.” President Monson then made the following remarks.

President Thomas S. Monson

My brothers and sisters, as we begin this first general session of the 178th Semi-annual General Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, we extend a special welcome to members and friends throughout the world as you participate with us in the proceedings of this conference.

We acknowledge with appreciation the General Authorities and the general auxiliary presidencies who are in attendance at this conference.

We are grateful to the many television and radio stations and satellite and cable systems for offering their facilities

as a public service to bring this conference to a large audience in many areas of the world.

The music for this session will be by the Tabernacle Choir, under the direction of Mack Wilberg and Ed Thompson, with Clay Christiansen and Andrew Unsworth at the organ. The choir opened this session by singing “High on the Mountain Top” and will now favor us with “Redeemer of Israel.” The invocation will then be offered by Elder Shayne M. Bowen of the Seventy.

The choir sang “Redeemer of Israel.” Elder Shayne M. Bowen offered the invocation.

President Monson

Thank you. It will now be my pleasure to address you. Following my remarks, the choir will sing “Oh, May My Soul Commune with Thee.” At the conclusion of the singing, Elder L. Tom Perry of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles will address us, after which we shall hear from Sister Silvia H. Allred, first counselor in the Relief Society general presidency. Elder Neil L. Andersen of the Presidency of the Seventy will then speak to us.

President Thomas S. Monson

Temple dedications and cultural events

My dear brothers and sisters, the past six months since last we met seem to have flown by. Much has transpired as the work of the Lord has moved forward uninterrupted.

It has been my privilege, accompanied by my counselors and by other General Authorities, to dedicate three new

temples: in Curitiba, Brazil; in Panama City, Panama; and in Twin Falls, Idaho—bringing to 128 the number of temples in operation throughout the world.

The evening before each of the temple dedications took place, magnificent cultural events were held. In Curitiba, Brazil, 4,330 members from the temple district, supported by a choir of 1,700

voices, presented a most inspirational program through song, dance, and video. The enormous soccer stadium where the event took place was filled with spectators. The wind had been blowing, and rain threatened. I offered a silent prayer asking Heavenly Father to look with mercy upon those who had prepared so diligently for our entertainment and whose costumes and presentations would be damaged if a heavy rain or wind enveloped them. He honored that prayer, and it wasn't until the end of the show and later on that evening that rain fell in abundance.

A history of the Church in Brazil was portrayed in song and dance. A particularly moving scene was the portrayal of Elders James E. Faust and William Grant Bangerter, who served as missionaries in Curitiba in 1940. As their photos were displayed on large screens, a tremendous cheer went up from the audience. All in all, it was a glorious event.

In Panama City, Panama, the evening before the dedication of the temple there, we watched some 900 of our youth who were gathered from across Panama. They were dressed in colorful folkloric costumes as they danced and presented messages of family, fellowship, and faith. We learned that they had been practicing for a year. They came from points as distant as the San Blas Islands and the Changuinola region in northeast Panama. The trip to the capital city for the San Blas youth exacted three days of travel over land and sea. The event was magnificent and inspiring.

In preparation for our most recent temple dedication, in Twin Falls, Idaho, local Church members constructed a huge stage at the Filer, Idaho, fairgrounds and filled the dirt arena with sod and other decorations, including a large waterfall to represent Shoshone Falls, a popular landmark located two miles from the new temple. The evening of the performance, 3,200 young men and young women entered the arena waving blue and white ribbons, turning the arena into a representation of a

great river of flowing water. Titled "Living Water," from John 4:10, 14, the celebration brought together youth from 14 stakes in the new temple district. They depicted through song and dance both their dependence for their spiritual lives on the living water from the Savior and their dependence for their physical lives on the mountain streams and rivers in their area. Those of us privileged to witness this event were uplifted and edified.

I am an advocate for such events. They enable our youth to participate in something they truly find unforgettable. The friendships they form and the memories they make will be theirs forever.

Next month the Mexico City Mexico Temple will be rededicated following extensive renovations. In the coming months, the construction of other temples will be completed, and open houses and dedications will take place.

Announcement of new temples

This morning I am pleased to announce five new temples for which sites have been acquired and which, in coming months and years, will be built in the following locations: Calgary, Alberta, Canada; Córdoba, Argentina; the greater Kansas City area; Philadelphia, Pennsylvania; and Rome, Italy.

Expanding missionary work

Brothers and sisters, our missionary force, serving throughout the world, continues to seek out those who are searching for the truths which are found in the gospel of Jesus Christ. The Church is steadily growing; it has since its organization over 178 years ago.

It has been my privilege during the past six months to meet with leaders of countries and with representatives of governments. Those with whom I've met feel kindly toward the Church and our members, and they have been cooperative and

accommodating. There remain, however, areas of the world where our influence is limited and where we are not allowed to share the gospel freely. As did President Spencer W. Kimball over 32 years ago, I urge you to pray for the opening of those areas, that we might share with them the joy of the gospel. As we prayed then in response to President Kimball's pleadings, we saw miracles unfold as country after country, formerly closed to the Church, was opened. Such will transpire again as we pray with faith.

Conference messages will inspire

Now, my brothers and sisters, we have come here to be instructed and inspired. Some of you are new in the Church. We welcome you. Some of you are struggling

with problems, with challenges, with disappointments, with losses. We love you and pray for you. Many messages will be shared during the next two days. I can assure you that those men and women who will speak to you have prayed about what they should say. They have been inspired and impressed as they have sought heaven's help and direction.

Our Heavenly Father is mindful of each one of us and our needs. May we be filled with His Spirit as we partake of the proceedings of this, the 178th Semiannual General Conference of the Church. This is my sincere prayer, and I offer it in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

The choir sang "Oh, May My Soul Commune with Thee."

Elder L. Tom Perry

Faith that the best is yet to come

Those of us who have been around a while—and Elder Wirthlin and I have been around for a long time—have recognized certain patterns in life's test. There are cycles of good and bad times, ups and downs, periods of joy and sadness, and times of plenty as well as scarcity. When our lives turn in an unanticipated and undesirable direction, sometimes we experience stress and anxiety. One of the challenges of this mortal experience is to not allow the stresses and strains of life to get the better of us—to endure the varied seasons of life while remaining positive, even optimistic. Perhaps when difficulties and challenges strike, we should have these hopeful words of Robert Browning etched in our minds: "The best is yet to be" ("Rabbi Ben Ezra," in Charles W. Eliot, ed., *The Harvard Classics*, 50 vols. [1909–10], 42:1103). We can't predict all the struggles and storms in life, not even the ones just around the next corner, but

as persons of faith and hope, we know beyond the shadow of any doubt that the gospel of Jesus Christ is true and the best is yet to come.

Simplifying overly complex lives

I remember a particular period of my life when I was under unusual stress. There were troubles with my employment, and at the same time my wife was diagnosed with a life-threatening illness. This was one of those times when it felt like the adversary had mounted a frontal assault against me and my family. On days when the stresses and anxieties of our tumultuous life were about to get the best of us, my wife and I found a way to relieve them.

We drove to a place just a few miles from our home to get away for a few moments of relief from our troubles, talk, and give emotional comfort to each other. Our place was Walden Pond. It was a beautiful little pond surrounded by forests of trees.

When my wife was feeling strong enough, we'd go for a walk around the pond. Other days, when she did not feel up to the exertion of walking, we'd just sit in the car and talk. Walden Pond was our special place to pause, reflect, and heal. Perhaps it was partly due to its history—its connection to the efforts of Henry David Thoreau to separate himself from worldliness for a period of years—that Walden Pond offered us so much hope for simplicity and provided such a renewing escape from our overly complex lives.

Thoreau's simplified life at Walden Pond

It was in March of 1845 that Thoreau decided to move out on the banks of Walden Pond and spend two years trying to figure out what life was all about. He settled on a piece of property owned by his good friend Ralph Waldo Emerson. He purchased an old shanty from a railroad worker and tore it down. From the lumber from the shanty and the lumber from the woods, he constructed his own cabin. He kept meticulous financial records, and he concluded that for a home and freedom he spent a mere \$28.12. He planted a garden, where he sowed peas, potatoes, corn, beans, and turnips to help sustain his simple life. He planted two and a half acres of beans with the intent of using the small profit to cover his needs. Small profit indeed: \$8.71.

Thoreau lived quite independent of time. He had neither a clock nor a calendar in his little cabin. He spent his time writing and studying the beauties and wonder of nature that surrounded him, including local plants, birds, and animals. He did not live the life of a hermit—he visited the town of Concord most days, and he invited others to come into his cabin for enlightening conversations.

When the two years ended, he left his cabin behind without regret. He considered the time he had spent there a proper amount of time to accomplish his purpose—to experience the spiritual benefits

of a simplified lifestyle. He also felt he had other life experiences ahead of him. It was time to move on and explore other opportunities.

Four basic needs of life

From his experiences at Walden Pond, Thoreau determined that there were only four things a man really needed: food, clothing, shelter, and fuel. I would like to expand on each of these four basic needs of life, as well as the spiritual benefits of a simplified lifestyle.

The Lord's law of health

The first requirement is food. As members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, we possess sacred knowledge from revealed truth about the relationship between the body and the spirit. Doctrine and Covenants 88:15 states, "The spirit and the body are the soul of man." To bless us both physically and spiritually, the Lord also revealed to us a law of health, telling us which foods and substances are good for the body and which are not. With these instructions comes the promise found in section 89 of the Doctrine and Covenants:

"And all saints who remember to keep and do these sayings, walking in obedience to the commandments, shall receive health in their navel and marrow to their bones;

"And shall find wisdom and great treasures of knowledge, even hidden treasures;

"And shall run and not be weary, and shall walk and not faint.

"And I, the Lord, give unto them a promise, that the destroying angel shall pass by them, as the children of Israel, and not slay them" (verses 18–21).

There is no better counsel concerning the Word of Wisdom than that found in the booklet *For the Strength of Youth*. It states:

"The Lord has commanded you to take good care of your body. To do this,

observe the Word of Wisdom, found in Doctrine and Covenants 89. Eat nutritious food, exercise regularly, and get enough sleep. When you do all these things, you remain free from harmful addictions and have control over your life. You gain the blessings of a healthy body, an alert mind, and the guidance of the Holy Ghost. . . .

“Any drug, chemical, or dangerous practice that is used to produce a sensation or ‘high’ can destroy your physical, mental, and spiritual well-being. These include hard drugs, prescription or over-the-counter medications that are abused, and household chemicals” ([2001], 36–37).

We do not want to harm our mortal bodies, for they are a gift from God, and part of our Heavenly Father’s great plan of happiness is the reuniting of our immortal bodies with our spirits.

Simple, modest clothing

Another basic necessity is our clothing. A simplified life that brings spiritual blessings requires the wearing of simple and modest clothing. Our dress and grooming send a message to others about who we are, and they also affect the way we act around others. When we are modestly dressed, we also invite the Spirit of the Lord to be a shield and a protection to us.

Worldly trends in women’s fashion are always inviting extremes. With their latest styles, many fashion designers appear to be trying to make two or three dresses out of the amount of fabric necessary for one. Mostly, they are taking too much off the top and too much off the bottom of women’s clothing, and occasionally they scrimp in the middle too. Men’s fashions are also adopting extreme styles. In my day they would be called sloppy and inappropriate. I believe very casual dress is almost always followed by very casual manners.

Many of you are trying too hard to be unique in your dress and grooming to attract what the Lord would consider the

wrong kind of attention. In the Book of Mormon story of the tree of life, it was the people whose “manner of dress was exceedingly fine” who mocked those who partook of the fruit of the tree. It is sobering to realize that the fashion-conscious mockers in the great and spacious building were responsible for embarrassing many, and those who were ashamed “fell away into forbidden paths and were lost” (1 Nephi 8:27–28).

President N. Eldon Tanner once cautioned us with these words: “Modesty in dress is a quality of mind and heart, born of respect for oneself, one’s fellowmen, and the Creator of us all. Modesty reflects an attitude of humility, decency, and propriety. Consistent with these principles and guided by the Holy Spirit, let parents, teachers, and youth discuss the particulars of dress, grooming, and personal appearance, and with free agency accept responsibility and choose the right” (“Friend to Friend,” *Friend*, June 1971, 3).

Housing that is within our income

Now let us turn to Thoreau’s third requirement—that of shelter. Newspapers are filled with reports of the current housing crisis. We have been encouraged at almost every general conference of the Church I can remember not to live beyond our means. Our income should determine the kind of housing we can afford, not the neighbor’s big home across the street.

President Heber J. Grant once said, “From my earliest recollections, from the days of Brigham Young until now, I have listened to men standing in the pulpit . . . urging the people not to run into debt; and I believe that the great majority of all our troubles today is caused through the failure to carry out that counsel” (in Conference Report, Oct. 1921, 3).

One of the better ways to simplify our lives is to follow the counsel we have so often received to live within our income, stay out of debt, and save for a rainy day.

We should practice and increase our habits of thrift, industry, economy, and frugality. Members of a well-managed family do not pay interest; they earn it.

Spiritual fuel

Thoreau's final necessity was fuel. We have been hearing a lot about fuel and energy—about their high cost and limited supply, our unsafe and unpredictable dependence on their suppliers, and the need for new and sustainable sources of energy. I leave the discussion of these complicated issues to leaders of government and industry. The fuel I want to discuss is spiritual fuel.

The Lord has given us a beautiful plan about how we can return to Him, but the completion of our mortal journey requires spiritual fuel. We want to emulate the five wise virgins, who had stored sufficient fuel to accompany the bridegroom when he came (see Matthew 25:6–10). What is required to maintain a sufficient store of spiritual fuel? We must acquire knowledge of God's eternal plan and our role in it, and then, by living righteously, surrendering our will to the will of the Lord, we receive the promised blessings.

As Elder William R. Bradford taught at this pulpit: "In righteousness there is

great simplicity. In every case that confronts us in life, there is either a right way or a wrong way to proceed. If we choose the right way, we are sustained in our actions by the principles of righteousness, in the which there is power from the heavens. If we choose the wrong way and act on that choice, there is no such heavenly promise or power, and we are alone and are destined to fail" (in Conference Report, Oct. 1999, 109; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1999, 85).

Seek to simplify our lives

Just before Thoreau died, he was asked if he had made peace with God. He replied, "I was not aware we had ever quarreled" (in Mardy Grothe, comp., *Viva la Repartee* [2005], 181).

In our search to obtain relief from the stresses of life, may we earnestly seek ways to simplify our lives. May we comply with the inspired counsel and direction the Lord has given us in the great plan of happiness. May we be worthy to have the companionship of the Holy Ghost and follow the guidance of the Spirit as we navigate this mortal journey. May we prepare ourselves to accomplish the ultimate purpose of this mortal test—to return and live with our Heavenly Father—is my prayer in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

Silvia H. Allred

Go ye therefore, and teach all nations

The Lord taught that "except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God."¹ Baptism is, therefore, essential for our salvation.

Before the resurrected Savior ascended to heaven, He instructed His disciples, "Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost:

teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you."²

At the time of the Restoration, He repeated His mandate: "Wherefore, you are called to cry repentance unto this people."³

The Lord's Church has the responsibility to preach the gospel in the world. This is the foundation of missionary work, and the duty of our missionaries is to "invite others to come unto Christ by helping them receive the restored gospel through

faith in Jesus Christ and His Atonement, repentance, baptism, receiving the gift of the Holy Ghost, and enduring to the end.”⁴

I would like to speak and testify of the significant impact and the blessings of missionary work in the lives of converts, future generations, and missionaries and of how we can participate in missionary work.

Conversion story

When I was 14 years old, on a beautiful August morning, Elder Prina and Elder Perkins knocked at our door. They began teaching our family about the true nature of God. In the visits that followed, they taught us how to pray. They also taught us about the Restoration and the plan of salvation. After the third or fourth visit, most of my family stopped listening to the missionaries, except for my 17-year-old sister, Dina, and me. We both felt the witness of the Holy Ghost in our hearts and received the spiritual confirmation that the message was true.

We bought a copy of the Book of Mormon and began reading it. Every day after school, we would race home to get to the book first. While the first one home was reading, the other one impatiently waited until mealtime, ate in a hurry, and then took her turn reading until bedtime. Such was the excitement we felt. We began attending church, and soon we asked to be baptized. Our father readily gave his permission, but our mother was hesitant, and it took one more month to persuade her to sign the permission slip. On the day of our baptism, she and the rest of our siblings went to church for the first time. She felt the Spirit. After hearing our testimonies, she went to the missionaries and asked them to start teaching her again. A few weeks later, Mother and our younger sister and brothers were baptized. My life changed forever, and the gospel of Jesus Christ became the compelling force in my life.

Blessings of missionary service

Words fail to express the deep feelings of gratitude for the Lord and the missionaries He sent to our home. The Lord blessed me with the knowledge of the restored gospel, and I felt an urgency to share this knowledge with others. I wanted to be a missionary.

Within months, my sister Dina and I were called as local missionaries in San Salvador. This calling gave us the opportunity to go door to door to share the glad news of the restored gospel of Jesus Christ and bring many people to the waters of baptism. In due time, we both served full-time missions in the Central America Mission.

My mission had a great impact on my life. I learned to rely more on the Lord, to seek the guidance of the Spirit, and to feel an overwhelming love for God’s children. My knowledge of the scriptures and my understanding of the doctrines increased. So did my desire to be obedient and to keep the commandments with exactness. My testimony of the Savior and His infinite Atonement was strengthened. My missionary experiences became part of who and what I am. Missionary work became my passion. It has impacted my life and that of my family more than anything else.

Elder Jeffrey R. Holland describes the impact his mission has had in his life with these words: “My mission means everything to me 47 years after the fact. There may have been one day in those 47 years that I have not thought of my mission; I’m just not sure what day that would have been.”⁵

Far-reaching impact of missionaries’ work

A couple of years ago my grandson Christian was turning eight and planning his baptismal service with great anticipation. He asked his mother if I could be one of the speakers and share my conversion

story. When I asked him why he wanted me to do that, he replied, “Grandma, that is so important. Do you realize that if you hadn’t accepted the gospel, I wouldn’t be getting baptized? I wouldn’t even be who I am.”

I don’t know if missionaries realize the far-reaching impact of their work. In my own family, the blessings of the gospel have now touched four generations. Didn’t President Gordon B. Hinckley say that “when we save a girl, we save generations”?⁶ I got married in the temple and have eight children. They are all faithful members of the Church, endowed in the temple. Six of them are now married and have their own children. At present there are 34 of us. And that is not all. Both my husband and I served missions, and our two sons and three of our six daughters have also served missions. Collectively we have helped hundreds embrace the gospel in many countries. Some of those converts and their children have also served missions.

Missionary work is the lifeblood of the Church. There is no greater work, no more important work. It blesses the lives of all those who participate in it. It will continue blessing future generations.

How to assist in missionary work

You might be asking yourself: How can I assist in missionary work? In what ways can I participate? There are two fundamental truths to keep in mind as you embark on the work. First, have a clear understanding that God loves all His children and desires their salvation. In Doctrine and Covenants 18:13 we read, “And how great is his joy in the soul that repenteth.” Second, our message of Christ and His restored gospel is the most important gift you have to give.

As outlined in *Preach My Gospel*, missionary work is a four-fold endeavor: finding investigators, teaching and baptizing, fellowshiping new members, and

fellowshipping and teaching less-active members.⁷ Every member of the Church—children, youth, and adults—can assist in any or all of these efforts.

Begin by being a good neighbor and a good friend. Set an example of righteousness and kindness. Let your smile radiate love, peace, and happiness. Live a gospel-centered life.

Then, be more specific in your missionary efforts. Let me suggest some ideas. You might find two or three that work for you:

- If you have children at home, help prepare them for missionary service.
- Prepare yourself for missionary service.
- Invite family and friends to listen to the missionaries or to attend Church meetings and activities.
- Accompany the missionaries to investigators’ homes, or invite the missionaries to teach nonmembers in your home.
- Invite people to a family home evening in your home.
- Invite people to a family history center, or help them do family history research.
- Give referrals to the missionaries. Members can be the greatest and best source of referrals.
- Share your beliefs and testimony with nonmember friends and family.
- Seek for opportunities to reach out to others.
- Extend friendship to investigators and new converts.
- Give your best efforts to finding those who are seeking the truth.
- If you have family members or friends on missions, send them letters of love and encouragement, and pray for them.

You will experience joy in the fruits of your labor. A greater enthusiasm for missionary work will strengthen your entire ward or branch. The whole Church will feel the effects of your labor.

We can all participate

When our daughter Margie was in the second grade, she invited her best friend to go with her to Primary. Both were assigned parts for the sacrament meeting presentation. Her friend's father had rejected the missionaries in the past, but when Margie showed up in his house with a handful of Church pamphlets, he listened carefully to her simple explanations and testimony of Joseph Smith and the First Vision. He not only allowed his daughter to continue going to Primary but also gave her permission to receive the lessons from the missionaries and be baptized. He and his wife attended the baptismal service.

We can all participate in missionary work. This is the Lord's work, and He will help us do it. His gospel has to go to every

nation, and we can be instruments in His hands to bless the lives of others by sharing with them His truth. We will be greatly blessed in the process.

We are the children of a loving Heavenly Father. He sent His Son to open the way so we can live with Him forever. Of this I testify in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

1. John 3:5.
2. Matthew 28:19–20.
3. Doctrine and Covenants 18:14.
4. *Preach My Gospel* (2004), 1.
5. Jeffrey R. Holland, "The Atonement" (seminar for new mission presidents, June 26, 2007), 1.
6. Gordon B. Hinckley, "Our Responsibility to Our Young Women," *Ensign*, Sept. 1988, 10.
7. See *Preach My Gospel*, 219.

Elder Neil L. Andersen

You know enough

I rejoice with you in being members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. As President Monson shared the wonderful news of five new temples, I thought how across the world, on every continent, in large cities and in small villages, we are a great family of believers. Together, we have begun our march toward eternal life. It is the journey of journeys. We go forward, taking upon us "the name of Christ, having a determination to serve him to the end."¹

While there are many experiences like the one we are having today, full of spiritual power and confirmation, there are also days when we feel inadequate and unprepared, when doubt and confusion enter our spirits, when we have difficulty finding our spiritual footing. Part of our victory as disciples of Christ is what we do when these feelings come.

Nearly 40 years ago as I contemplated the challenge of a mission, I felt very in-

adequate and unprepared. I remember praying, "Heavenly Father, how can I serve a mission when I know so little?" I believed in the Church, but I felt my spiritual knowledge was very limited. As I prayed, the feeling came: "You don't know everything, but you know enough!" That reassurance gave me the courage to take the next step into the mission field.

Conversion comes line upon line

Our spiritual journey is the process of a lifetime. We do not know everything in the beginning or even along the way. Our conversion comes step by step, line upon line. We first build a foundation of faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. We treasure the principles and ordinances of repentance, baptism, and receiving the gift of the Holy Ghost. We include a continuing commitment to prayer, a willingness to be obedient, and an ongoing witness of the Book of Mormon. (The Book of Mormon is powerful spiritual nourishment.)

We then remain steady and patient as we progress through mortality. At times the Lord's answer will be, "You don't know everything, but you know enough"—enough to keep the commandments and to do what is right. Remember Nephi's words: "I know that he loveth his children; nevertheless, I do not know the meaning of all things."²

Prepare spiritual home storage

I once visited a mission in southern Europe. I arrived on the day a new missionary was preparing to return home at his own insistence. He had his ticket to leave the next day.

We sat together in the mission president's home. The missionary told me about his challenging childhood, of learning disorders, of moving from one family to another. He spoke sincerely of his inability to learn a new language and adapt to a new culture. Then he added, "Brother Andersen, I don't even know if God loves me." As he said those words, I felt a sure and forceful feeling come into my spirit: "He does know I love him. He knows it."

I let him continue for a few more minutes, and then I said, "Elder, I'm sympathetic to much of what you've said, but I must correct you on one thing: you do know God loves you. You know He does."

As I said those words to him, the same Spirit that had spoken to me spoke to him. He bowed his head and began to cry. He apologized. "Brother Andersen," he said, "I do know God loves me; I do know it." He didn't know everything, but he knew enough. He knew God loved him. That priceless piece of spiritual knowledge was sufficient for his doubt to be replaced with faith. He found the strength to stay on his mission.

Brothers and sisters, we each have moments of spiritual power, moments of inspiration and revelation. We must sink them deep into the chambers of our souls. As we do, we prepare our spiritual home storage for moments of personal difficulty.

Jesus said, "Settle this in your hearts, that ye will do the things which I shall teach, and command you."³

Faith is a decision, not just a feeling

Several years ago a friend of mine had a young daughter die in a tragic accident. Hopes and dreams were shattered. My friend felt unbearable sorrow. He began to question what he had been taught and what he had taught as a missionary. The mother of my friend wrote me a letter and asked if I would give him a blessing. As I laid my hands upon his head, I felt to tell him something that I had not thought about in exactly the same way before. The impression that came to me was: Faith is not only a feeling; it is a decision. He would need to choose faith.

My friend did not know everything, but he knew enough. He chose the road of faith and obedience. He got on his knees. His spiritual balance returned.

It has been several years since that event. A short time ago I received a letter from his son who is now serving a mission. It was full of conviction and testimony. As I read his beautiful letter, I saw how a father's choice of faith in a very difficult time had deeply blessed the next generation.

Choose the road of faith

Challenges, difficulties, questions, doubts—these are part of our mortality. But we are not alone. As disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ, we have enormous spiritual reservoirs of light and truth available to us. Fear and faith cannot coexist in our hearts at the same time. In our days of difficulty, we choose the road of faith. Jesus said, "Be not afraid, only believe."⁴

Through the years we take these important spiritual steps over and over again. We begin to see that "he that receiveth light, and continueth in God, receiveth more light; and that light groweth brighter and brighter until the perfect day."⁵ Our

questions and doubts are resolved or become less concerning to us. Our faith becomes simple and pure. We come to know what we already knew.

Hadley knew enough

Jesus said, “Except ye . . . become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven.”⁶

Hadley Peay is now seven years old. Hadley was born with a very serious hearing impairment requiring extensive surgery to bring even limited hearing. Her parents followed with tireless training to help her learn to speak. Hadley and her family have cheerfully adapted to the challenge of her deafness.

Once, when Hadley was four, she was standing in the checkout line at the grocery store with her mother. She looked behind her and saw a little boy sitting in a wheelchair. She noticed that the boy did not have legs.

Although Hadley had learned to speak, she had difficulty controlling the volume of her voice. In her louder voice, she asked her mother why the little boy did not have legs.

Her mother quietly and simply explained to Hadley that “Heavenly Father makes all of His children different.” “OK,” Hadley replied.

Then, unexpectedly, Hadley turned to the little boy and said, “Did you know that when Heavenly Father made me, my ears did not work? That makes me special. He made you with no legs, and that

makes you special. When Jesus comes, I will be able to hear and you will get your legs. Jesus will make everything all right.”

“Except ye . . . become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven.”

Hadley knew enough.

Jesus is the Christ. He is resurrected. He is our Savior and Redeemer. All will be made well when He comes again. This is His holy work. Through the Prophet Joseph Smith, His priesthood was restored upon the earth, and His prophet today is President Thomas S. Monson. I so testify in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

1. Moroni 6:3.
2. 1 Nephi 11:17.
3. Joseph Smith Translation, Luke 14:28.
4. Mark 5:36.
5. Doctrine and Covenants 50:24.
6. Matthew 18:3.

President Monson

The choir and congregation will now sing “Come, Ye Children of the Lord.” Following the singing, we will hear from Elder Marcos A. Aidukaitis of the Seventy. He will be followed by Elder Dallin H. Oaks of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. The choir will then sing “Do What Is Right.”

The choir and congregation sang
“Come, Ye Children of the Lord.”

Elder Marcos A. Aidukaitis

Story of father’s baptism

Good morning, dear brothers and sisters. I feel a profound joy and honor in speaking to you today. I pray that God may guide my words and that His Spirit may be with us so that “he that preacheth

and he that receiveth, [may] understand one another, and both [may be] edified and rejoice together” (D&C 50:22).

I consider June 2, 1940, to be a very important day in the history of my family. On this day my father was baptized into this Church.

Writing to his father, Elder Jack McDonald, one of the missionaries who baptized my father, described the day with these words:

“Last Sunday was an especially beautiful day. We missionaries went out to a secluded spot on the river’s edge, out in the country, and there Elder Jones and I [Elder McDonald] made our first baptism. Antony Aidukaitis entered into the icy waters and became a member of the Church. . . . Everything was perfect. The sky so blue, the countryside so still, so green, so lovely that none of us could help feeling the presence of some great influence.

“[As we walked] with our new member, he said that he just couldn’t explain how wonderful this day had been for him, how he actually felt like a new man. . . . That was our first baptism—no credit to me or anybody. He converted himself.”

This event changed the history of my life. I am not sure my father was able to foresee the wisdom of his act, but I love him for what he did that day. He passed away more than 30 years ago, but I will honor and bless his name forever.

Father’s courage to be baptized

My father was the son of Lithuanians, but he was born in Scotland. He moved to Brazil when he was still young. His ability to speak English facilitated his conversion, since he could read the Book of Mormon in English and there was not yet a reliable translation into Portuguese. This language barrier prevented my mother from joining the Church until a few years later, but when she did, she became a powerful example of dedication to others and love of God in our family. She is now 92 years old, and she is here today. It gives me great joy to say that I love her for her great faithfulness. I will also honor and bless her name forever.

I admire the courage my father had to be baptized into the Church in spite of the circumstances he faced at the time. It was

not easy for him. His wife did not get baptized with him. The vices of drinking alcohol and smoking were strong temptations for him. He was poor. His mother was against his joining the Church, and she told him that if he were baptized, she would no longer consider him her son. With fewer than 300 members in Brazil, the Church did not have a single chapel there. I am truly astonished by my father’s determination and courage.

Promises regarding the Book of Mormon

How could my father make such a decision in the face of so many unfavorable circumstances? The answer is simple: it was because my father read the Book of Mormon. When he read it, he came to know of the truthfulness of the message of the Restoration. The Book of Mormon is a proof that The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is true. *Preach My Gospel* teaches that “the Book of Mormon, combined with the Spirit, is [the] most powerful resource in conversion” ([2004], 104).

President Gordon B. Hinckley declared:

“Those who have read [the Book of Mormon] prayerfully, be they rich or poor, learned or unlearned, have grown under its power. . . .

“ . . . Without reservation I promise you that if you will prayerfully read the Book of Mormon, regardless of how many times you previously have read it, there will come into your hearts . . . the Spirit of the Lord. There will come a strengthened resolution to walk in obedience to his commandments, and there will come a stronger testimony of the living reality of the Son of God” (“The Power of the Book of Mormon,” *Ensign*, June 1988, 6).

These promises came true for my father and for my family. In accordance with what we have been taught, we read the scriptures as a family every day. We have done so for many years. We have read the Book of Mormon several times

in our home, and we will continue to do so. As promised, the Spirit of the Lord has come into the heart of our family, and we have felt a strengthened resolution to walk in obedience to His commandments and a stronger testimony of the living reality of the Son of God.

Knowledge from the Book of Mormon

When you know that the Book of Mormon is true, you know that Joseph Smith was called by God to restore the Church of Jesus Christ to the earth. You know that Joseph Smith saw the Father and the Son. You know that there is only one faith and one valid baptism. You know that a prophet of God lives on the earth today and that he has all the keys of the priesthood and the right to exercise them, as Peter did anciently. You know that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, the only name whereby you can receive salvation. You know that God the Father lives and that He loves us. You know that His plan of salvation is perfect, and you have the desire to perform ordinances, live the commandments, and endure to the end.

I feel sad when someone who has been given the Book of Mormon and had these things explained to him still refuses to read it. I feel sad that some people allow themselves to be influenced by others, refuse to investigate the book, and set it aside as something without worth, never participating in the spiritual banquet it offers. To me, this is incomprehensible. It is as if a son or a daughter, separated from a loving father, refused to read a letter from him without even opening the envelope. Those who make such a choice are like spoiled children who refuse to even taste the meal tenderly prepared for them by their loving mother.

How to learn truth

God reveals His truth when people follow Moroni's exhortation in Moroni

10:3–5. *Preach My Gospel* summarizes Moroni's instructions as follows:

- One, "read the Book of Mormon and ponder its message concerning Jesus Christ."
- Two, "pray to God with faith in Jesus Christ to receive a testimony that the Book of Mormon is true and that Joseph Smith is the prophet of the Restoration."
- Three, "pray sincerely and have real intent, which means that they intend to act on the answer they receive from God" (111).

To those who may argue that we cannot know these things, I testify that we can, when we are humble enough to do as God has instructed us through His prophets on this earth. To believe otherwise would be to accept the absurd notion that God also does not know where truth can be found or does not have the power to show it to us. Just because someone has not acted on the promise of this book does not mean that others have not done so.

Invitation and testimony

Why do I love and honor the name of my father? Because my father read and acted on the promise of the Book of Mormon. Why do I love and honor the name of my father? Because he did not recoil from the answer he received, even while facing great challenges. Why do I love and honor the name of my father? Because he blessed my life, even before I was born, by having the courage to do what God expected him to do.

I invite all who hear me today to read the Book of Mormon and to apply the promise it contains. Those who do will know that the book is true.

I bear my testimony that the Book of Mormon is the word of God. Because of this, I know that Joseph Smith is a prophet of God. I know that he did not write the Book of Mormon but translated it by the power of God. I know that Thomas S. Monson is a prophet of God on the earth

today, the only man on the earth who holds all the keys of the priesthood and has the right to exercise them. I know that

Jesus Christ is our Savior and that He lives. I know that God lives and loves us. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

Elder Dallin H. Oaks

The great promise of the sacrament

We live in the perilous times prophesied by the Apostle Paul (see 2 Timothy 3:1). Those who try to walk the straight and narrow path see inviting detours on every hand. We can be distracted, degraded, downhearted, or depressed. How can we have the Spirit of the Lord to guide our choices and keep us on the path?

In modern revelation the Lord gave the answer in this commandment:

“And that thou mayest more fully keep thyself unspotted from the world, thou shalt go to the house of prayer and offer up thy sacraments upon my holy day;

“For verily this is a day appointed unto you to rest from your labors, and to pay thy devotions unto the Most High” (D&C 59:9–10).

This is a commandment with a promise. By participating weekly and appropriately in the ordinance of the sacrament, we qualify for the promise that we will “always have his Spirit to be with [us]” (D&C 20:77). That Spirit is the foundation of our testimony. It testifies of the Father and the Son, brings all things to our remembrance, and leads us into truth. It is the compass to guide us on our path. This gift of the Holy Ghost, President Wilford Woodruff taught, “is the greatest gift that can be bestowed upon man” (*Deseret Weekly*, Apr. 6, 1889, 451).

The significance of sacrament meeting

The ordinance of the sacrament makes sacrament meeting the most sacred and important meeting in the Church. It is the only Sabbath meeting the entire family can attend together. Its content in addition to

the sacrament should always be planned and presented to focus our attention on the Atonement and teachings of the Lord Jesus Christ.

My first memories of sacrament meeting are set in the small Utah town where I was ordained a deacon and participated in passing the sacrament. Measured against those memories, the sacrament meetings I now attend in many different wards are greatly improved. Typically the sacrament is administered, passed, and received by the members in an atmosphere of quiet reverence. The conducting of the meeting, including the necessary business, is brief and dignified, and the talks are spiritual in content and delivery. The music is appropriate, and so are the prayers. This is the standard, and it represents great progress since the experiences of my youth.

There are occasional exceptions. I sense that some in the rising generation and even some adults have not yet come to understand the significance of this meeting and the importance of individual reverence and worship in it. The things I feel impressed to teach here are addressed to those who are not yet understanding and practicing these important principles and not yet enjoying the promised spiritual blessings of always having His guiding Spirit to be with them.

Preparation to partake of the sacrament

I begin with how members of the Church should prepare themselves to participate in the ordinance of the sacrament. In a worldwide leadership training meeting five years ago, Elder Russell M. Nelson of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles taught priesthood leaders of the Church

how to plan and conduct sacrament meetings. “We commemorate His Atonement in a very personal way,” Elder Nelson said. “We bring a broken heart and a contrite spirit to our sacrament meeting. It is the highlight of our Sabbath-day observance” (“Worshiping at Sacrament Meeting,” *Ensign*, Aug. 2004, 26).

We are seated well before the meeting begins. “During that quiet interval, prelude music is subdued. This is not a time for conversation or transmission of messages but a period of prayerful meditation as leaders and members prepare spiritually for the sacrament” (*Ensign*, Aug. 2004, 27).

When the Savior appeared to the Nephites following His Resurrection, He taught them that they should stop the practice of sacrifice by the shedding of blood. Instead, “ye shall offer for a sacrifice unto me a broken heart and a contrite spirit” (3 Nephi 9:20). That commandment, repeated in the modern revelation directing us to partake of the sacrament each week, tells us how we should prepare. As Elder Nelson taught, “Each member of the Church bears responsibility for the spiritual enrichment that can come from a sacrament meeting” (*Ensign*, Aug. 2004, 28).

In his writings on the doctrines of salvation, President Joseph Fielding Smith teaches that we partake of the sacrament as our part of commemorating the Savior’s death and sufferings for the redemption of the world. This ordinance was introduced so that we can renew our covenants to serve Him, to obey Him, and to always remember Him. President Smith adds, “We cannot retain the Spirit of the Lord if we do not consistently comply with this commandment” (*Doctrines of Salvation*, comp. Bruce R. McConkie, 3 vols. [1954–56], 2:341).

Dress, reverence, music, contemplation

How we dress is an important indicator of our attitude and preparation for

any activity in which we will engage. If we are going swimming or hiking or playing on the beach, our clothing, including our footwear, will indicate this. The same should be true of how we dress when we are to participate in the ordinance of the sacrament. It is like going to the temple. Our manner of dress indicates the degree to which we understand and honor the ordinance in which we will participate.

During sacrament meeting—and especially during the sacrament service—we should concentrate on worship and refrain from all other activities, especially from behavior that could interfere with the worship of others. Even a person who slips into quiet slumber does not interfere with others. Sacrament meeting is not a time for reading books or magazines. Young people, it is not a time for whispered conversations on cell phones or for texting persons at other locations. When we partake of the sacrament, we make a sacred covenant that we will always remember the Savior. How sad to see persons obviously violating that covenant in the very meeting where they are making it.

The music of sacrament meeting is a vital part of our worship. The scriptures teach that the song of the righteous is a prayer unto the Lord (see D&C 25:12). The First Presidency has declared that “some of the greatest sermons are preached by the singing of hymns” (*Hymns*, ix). How wonderful when every person in attendance joins in the worship of singing—especially in the hymn that helps us prepare to partake of the sacrament. All sacrament meeting music requires careful planning, always remembering that this music is for worship, not for performance.

President Joseph Fielding Smith taught: “This is an occasion when *the gospel should be presented*, when we should be called upon to exercise faith, and to reflect on the mission of our Redeemer, and to spend time in the consideration of the saving principles of the gospel, and not for other purposes. Amusement, laughter,

light-mindedness, are all out of place in the sacrament meetings of the Latter-day Saints. We should assemble in the spirit of prayer, of meekness, with devotion in our hearts” (*Doctrines of Salvation*, 2:342).

When we do this—when we join in the solemnity that should always accompany the ordinance of the sacrament and the worship of this meeting—we are qualified for the companionship and revelation of the Spirit. This is the way we get direction for our lives and peace along the way.

The Lord’s teachings about the sacrament

The resurrected Lord emphasized the importance of the sacrament when He visited the American continent and instituted this ordinance among the faithful Nephites. He blessed the emblems of the sacrament and gave them to His disciples and the multitude (see 3 Nephi 18:1–10), commanding:

“And this shall ye always do to those who repent and are baptized in my name; and ye shall do it in remembrance of my blood, which I have shed for you, that ye may witness unto the Father that ye do always remember me. And if ye do always remember me ye shall have my Spirit to be with you.

“ . . . And if ye shall always do these things blessed are ye, for ye are built upon my rock.

“But whoso among you shall do more or less than these are not built upon my rock, but are built upon a sandy foundation; and when the rain descends, and the floods come, and the winds blow, and beat upon them, they shall fall” (3 Nephi 18:11–13).

The sacrament is the ordinance that replaced the blood sacrifices and burnt offerings of the Mosaic law, and with it came the Savior’s promise: “And whoso cometh unto me with a broken heart and a contrite spirit, him will I baptize with fire and with the Holy Ghost” (3 Nephi 9:20).

Counsel on officiating in the sacrament

Now I speak particularly to the priesthood holders who officiate in the sacrament. This ordinance should always be performed with reverence and dignity. Priests who offer the prayers in behalf of the congregation should speak the words slowly and distinctly, expressing the terms of the covenants and promised blessings. This is a very sacred act.

The teachers who prepare and the deacons who pass the emblems of the sacrament also perform a very sacred act. I love President Thomas S. Monson’s account of how, as a 12-year-old deacon, he was asked by the bishop to take the sacrament to a bedfast brother who longed for this blessing. “His gratitude overwhelmed me,” President Monson said. “The Spirit of the Lord came over me. I stood on sacred ground” (*Inspiring Experiences That Build Faith* [1994], 188). All who officiate in this sacred ordinance stand on sacred ground.

Young men who officiate in the ordinance of the sacrament should be worthy. The Lord has said, “Be ye clean that bear the vessels of the Lord” (D&C 38:42). The scriptural warning about partaking of the sacrament unworthily (see 1 Corinthians 11:29; 3 Nephi 18:29) surely applies also to those who officiate in that ordinance. In administering discipline to Church members who have committed serious sins, a bishop can temporarily withdraw the privilege of *partaking* of the sacrament. That same authority is surely available to withdraw the privilege of *officiating* in that sacred ordinance.

What I said earlier about the importance of appropriate dress for those who receive the ordinance of the sacrament obviously applies with special force to the young men of the Aaronic Priesthood who officiate in any part of that sacred ordinance. All should be well groomed and modestly dressed. There should be nothing about their personal appearance

or actions that would call special attention to themselves or distract anyone present from full attention to the worship and covenant making that are the purpose of this sacred service.

Elder Jeffrey R. Holland gave a valuable teaching on this subject in general conference 13 years ago. Since most of our current deacons were not even born when these words were last spoken here, I repeat them for their benefit and that of their parents and teachers:

“May I suggest that wherever possible a white shirt be worn by the deacons, teachers, and priests who handle the sacrament. For sacred ordinances in the Church we often use ceremonial clothing, and a white shirt could be seen as a gentle reminder of the white clothing you wore in the baptismal font and an anticipation of the white shirt you will soon wear into the temple and on your missions” (in Conference Report, Oct. 1995, 89; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1995, 68).

Finally, the sacrament is administered only when authorized by the one holding the keys to this priesthood ordinance. This is why the sacrament is not generally served in the home or at family reunions, even where there are sufficient priesthood holders available. Those who officiate at the sacrament table, prepare the sacrament, or pass it to the congregation should be designated by one who holds or exercises the keys of this ordinance. I refer to the bishopric or to the presidencies of the teachers or deacons quorums. “[My] house is a house of order,” the Lord declared (D&C 132:8).

Always have His Spirit to be with us

How can we have the Spirit of the Lord to guide our choices so that we will

remain “unspotted from the world” (D&C 59:9) and on the safe path through mortality? We need to qualify for the cleansing power of the Atonement of Jesus Christ. We do this by keeping His commandment to come to Him with a broken heart and a contrite spirit and in that wonderful weekly meeting partake of the emblems of the sacrament and make the covenants that qualify us for the precious promise that we will always have His Spirit to be with us (see D&C 20:77). That we may always do so is my humble prayer, which I offer in the name of Him whose Atonement makes it all possible, even Jesus Christ, amen.

The choir sang “Do What Is Right.”

President Monson

Thank you, brethren and Sister Allred, for your inspiring words. We likewise express our appreciation to the Tabernacle Choir for the beautiful music they have provided this morning.

It will now be our pleasure to hear the choir sing “O Thou Kind and Gracious Father,” after which President Dieter F. Uchtdorf, Second Counselor in the First Presidency, will be our concluding speaker at this session.

Following President Uchtdorf’s remarks, the choir will sing “I Need Thee Every Hour.” The benediction will then be offered by Elder Craig A. Cardon of the Seventy, and conference will be adjourned until 2:00 this afternoon.

The choir sang “O Thou Kind and Gracious Father.”

President Dieter F. Uchtdorf

The infinite power of hope

My dear brothers and sisters and friends, what a glorious day for us to witness the announcement of five new temples by our beloved prophet. What a beautiful day for all of us.

Toward the end of World War II, my father was drafted into the German army and sent to the western front, leaving my mother alone to care for our family. Though I was only three years old, I can still remember this time of fear and hunger. We lived in Czechoslovakia, and with every passing day the war came nearer and the danger grew greater.

Finally, during the cold winter of 1944, my mother decided to flee to Germany, where her parents were living. She bundled us up and somehow managed to get us on one of the last refugee trains heading west. Traveling during that time was dangerous. Everywhere we went, the sound of explosions, the stressed faces, and ever-present hunger reminded us that we were in a war zone.

Along the way the train stopped occasionally to get supplies. One night during one of these stops, my mother hurried out of the train to search for some food for her four children. When she returned, to her great horror, the train and her children were gone!

She was weighed down with worry; desperate prayers filled her heart. She frantically searched the large and dark train station, urgently crisscrossing the numerous tracks while hoping against hope that the train had not already departed.

Perhaps I will never know all that went through my mother's heart and mind on that black night as she searched through a grim railroad station for her lost children. That she was terrified, I have no doubt. I am certain it crossed her mind that if she did not find this train, she might never see her children again. I know with

certainty: her faith overcame her fear, and her hope overcame her despair. She was not a woman who would sit and bemoan tragedy. She moved. She put her faith and hope into action.

And so she ran from track to track and from train to train until she finally found our train. It had been moved to a remote area of the station. There, at last, she found her children again.

I have often thought about that night and what my mother must have endured. If I could go back in time and sit by her side, I would ask her how she managed to go on in the face of her fears. I would ask about faith and hope and how she overcame despair.

While that is impossible, perhaps today I could sit by your side and by the side of any who might feel discouraged, worried, or lonely. Today I would like to speak with you about the infinite power of hope.

The importance of hope

Hope is one leg of a three-legged stool, together with faith and charity. These three stabilize our lives regardless of the rough or uneven surfaces we might encounter at the time. The scriptures are clear and certain about the importance of hope. The Apostle Paul taught that the scriptures were written to the end that we "might have hope."¹

Hope has the power to fill our lives with happiness.² Its absence—when this desire of our heart is delayed—can make "the heart sick."³

Hope is a gift of the Spirit.⁴ It is a hope that through the Atonement of Jesus Christ and the power of His Resurrection, we shall be raised unto life eternal and this because of our faith in the Savior.⁵ This kind of hope is both a principle of promise as well as a commandment,⁶ and, as with all commandments, we have the responsibility to make it an active part of

our lives and overcome the temptation to lose hope. Hope in our Heavenly Father's merciful plan of happiness leads to peace,⁷ mercy,⁸ rejoicing,⁹ and gladness.¹⁰ The hope of salvation is like a protective helmet;¹¹ it is the foundation of our faith¹² and an anchor to our souls.¹³

Moroni in his solitude—even after having witnessed the complete destruction of his people—believed in hope. In the twilight of the Nephite nation, Moroni wrote that without hope we cannot receive an inheritance in the kingdom of God.¹⁴

Why, then, is there despair?

The scriptures say that there must be “an opposition in all things.”¹⁵ So it is with faith, hope, and charity. Doubt, despair, and failure to care for our fellowmen lead us into temptation, which can cause us to forfeit choice and precious blessings.

The adversary uses despair to bind hearts and minds in suffocating darkness. Despair drains from us all that is vibrant and joyful and leaves behind the empty remnants of what life was meant to be. Despair kills ambition, advances sickness, pollutes the soul, and deadens the heart. Despair can seem like a staircase that leads only and forever downward.

Hope, on the other hand, is like the beam of sunlight rising up and above the horizon of our present circumstances. It pierces the darkness with a brilliant dawn. It encourages and inspires us to place our trust in the loving care of an eternal Heavenly Father, who has prepared a way for those who seek for eternal truth in a world of relativism, confusion, and of fear.

What, then, is hope?

The complexities of language offer several variations and intensities of the word *hope*. For example, a toddler may hope for a toy phone; an adolescent may hope for a phone call from a special friend; and an adult may simply hope that the phone will stop ringing altogether.

I wish to speak today of the hope that transcends the trivial and centers on the Hope of Israel,¹⁶ the great hope of mankind, even our Redeemer, Jesus Christ.

Hope is not knowledge,¹⁷ but rather the abiding trust that the Lord will fulfill His promise to us. It is confidence that if we live according to God's laws and the words of His prophets now, we will receive desired blessings in the future.¹⁸ It is believing and expecting that our prayers will be answered. It is manifest in confidence, optimism, enthusiasm, and patient perseverance.

In the language of the gospel, this hope is sure, unwavering, and active. The prophets of old speak of a “firm hope”¹⁹ and a “lively hope.”²⁰ It is a hope glorifying God through good works. With hope come joy and happiness.²¹ With hope, we can “have patience, and bear [our] afflictions.”²²

Things we hope for, things we hope in

The things we hope *for* are often future events. If only we could look beyond the horizon of mortality into what awaits us beyond this life. Is it possible to imagine a more glorious future than the one prepared for us by our Heavenly Father? Because of the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, we need not fear, for we will live forever, never to taste of death again.²³ Because of His infinite Atonement, we can be cleansed of sin and stand pure and holy before the judgment bar.²⁴ The Savior is the Author of our Salvation.²⁵

And what kind of existence can we hope for? Those who come unto Christ, repent of their sins, and live in faith will reside forever in peace. Think of the worth of this eternal gift. Surrounded by those we love, we will know the meaning of ultimate joy as we progress in knowledge and in happiness. No matter how bleak the chapter of our lives may look today, because of the life and sacrifice of Jesus Christ, we may hope and be assured that

the ending of the book of our lives will exceed our grandest expectations. “Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him.”²⁶

The things we hope *in* sustain us during our daily walk. They uphold us through trials, temptations, and sorrow. Everyone has experienced discouragement and difficulty. Indeed, there are times when the darkness may seem unbearable. It is in these times that the divine principles of the restored gospel we hope *in* can uphold us and carry us until, once again, we walk in the light.

We hope in Jesus the Christ, in the goodness of God, in the manifestations of the Holy Spirit, in the knowledge that prayers are heard and answered. Because God has been faithful and kept His promises in the past, we can hope with confidence that God will keep His promises to us in the present and in the future. In times of distress, we can hold tightly to the hope that things will “work together for [our] good”²⁷ as we follow the counsel of God’s prophets. This type of hope in God, His goodness, and His power refreshes us with courage during difficult challenges and gives strength to those who feel threatened by enclosing walls of fear, doubt, and despair.

Hope leads to good works

We learn to cultivate hope the same way we learn to walk, one step at a time. As we study the scriptures, speak with our Heavenly Father daily, and commit to keep the commandments of God, like the Word of Wisdom and paying a full tithing, we attain hope.²⁸ We grow in our ability to “abound in hope, through the power of the Holy Ghost,”²⁹ as we more perfectly live the gospel.

There may be times when we must make a courageous decision to hope even when everything around us contradicts this hope. Like Father Abraham, we will

“against hope [believe] in hope.”³⁰ Or, as one writer expressed, “in the depth of winter, [we find] within [us] an invincible summer.”³¹

Faith, hope, and charity complement each other, and as one increases, the others grow as well. Hope comes of faith,³² for without faith, there *is* no hope.³³ In like manner faith comes of hope, for faith is “the substance of things hoped for.”³⁴

Hope is critical to both faith and charity. When disobedience, disappointment, and procrastination erode faith, hope is there to uphold our faith. When frustration and impatience challenge charity, hope braces our resolve and urges us to care for our fellowmen even without expectation of reward. The brighter our hope, the greater our faith. The stronger our hope, the purer our charity.

The things we hope *for* lead us to faith, while the things we hope *in* lead us to charity. The three qualities—faith, hope, and charity³⁵—working together, grounded on the truth and light of the restored gospel of Jesus Christ, lead us to abound in good works.³⁶

Hope from personal experience

Each time a hope is fulfilled, it creates confidence and leads to greater hope. I can think of many instances in my life where I learned firsthand the power of hope. I well remember the days in my childhood encompassed by the horrors and despair of a world war, the lack of educational opportunities, life-threatening health issues during youth, and the challenging and discouraging economic experiences as a refugee. The example of our mother, even in the worst of times, to move forward and put faith and hope into action, not just worrying or wishful thinking, sustained our family and me and gave confidence that present circumstances would give way to future blessings.

I know from these experiences that it is the gospel of Jesus Christ and our membership in The Church of Jesus Christ of

Latter-day Saints that strengthen faith, offer a bright hope, and lead us to charity.

Hope sustains us through despair.

Hope teaches that there is reason to rejoice even when all seems dark around us.

With Jeremiah I proclaim, “Blessed is the man . . . whose hope the Lord is.”³⁷

With Joel I testify, “The Lord [is] the hope of his people, and the strength of the children of Israel.”³⁸

With Nephi I declare: “Press forward with a steadfastness in Christ, having a perfect brightness of hope, and a love of God and of all men. Wherefore, if ye shall press forward, feasting upon the word of Christ, and endure to the end, behold, thus saith the Father: Ye shall have eternal life.”³⁹

This is the quality of hope we must cherish and develop. Such a mature hope comes in and through our Savior Jesus Christ, for “every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as [the Savior] is pure.”⁴⁰

Never surrender to despair

The Lord has given us a reassuring message of hope: “Fear not, little flock.”⁴¹ God waits with “open arms to receive”⁴² those who give away their sins and continue in faith, hope, and charity.

And to all who suffer—to all who feel discouraged, worried, or lonely—I say with love and deep concern for you, never give in. Never allow despair to overcome your spirit.

Embrace and rely upon the Hope of Israel, for the love of the Son of God pierces all darkness, softens all sorrow, and gladdens every heart.

Of this I testify and leave you my blessing in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

1. Romans 15:4.
2. See Psalm 146:5.

3. Proverbs 13:12.
4. See Moroni 8:26.
5. See Moroni 7:41.
6. See Colossians 1:21–23.
7. See Romans 15:13.
8. See Psalm 33:22.
9. See Romans 12:12.
10. See Proverbs 10:28.
11. See 1 Thessalonians 5:8.
12. See Hebrews 11:1; Moroni 7:40.
13. See Hebrews 6:19; Ether 12:4.
14. See Ether 12:32; see also Romans 8:24.
15. 2 Nephi 2:11.
16. See Jeremiah 17:13.
17. See Romans 8:24.
18. See Doctrine and Covenants 59:23.
19. Alma 34:41.
20. 1 Peter 1:3.
21. See Psalm 146:5.
22. Alma 34:41.
23. See Alma 11:45.
24. See 2 Nephi 2:6–10.
25. See Hebrews 5:9.
26. 1 Corinthians 2:9.
27. Doctrine and Covenants 90:24.
28. See Romans 15:13.
29. Romans 15:13.
30. Romans 4:18.
31. Albert Camus, in John Bartlett, comp., *Familiar Quotations*, 17th ed. (2002), 790.
32. See Ether 12:4.
33. See Moroni 7:42.
34. Hebrews 11:1.
35. See Moroni 10:20.
36. See Alma 7:24.
37. Jeremiah 17:7.
38. Joel 3:16.
39. 2 Nephi 31:20.
40. 1 John 3:3.
41. Doctrine and Covenants 6:34.
42. See Mormon 6:17.

The choir sang “I Need Thee Every Hour.”

Elder Craig A. Cardon offered the benediction.

SATURDAY AFTERNOON SESSION

The second session of the 178th Semiannual General Conference convened in the Conference Center at 2:00 p.m. on Saturday, October 4, 2008. President Henry B. Eyring conducted this session.

Music was provided by a Primary choir from Kaysville and Fruit Heights, Utah. Colleen Paddock directed the choir, and Linda Margetts was the organist.

President Henry B. Eyring

We welcome you to the second general session of the 178th Semiannual General Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. President Thomas S. Monson, who presides at this conference, has asked that I, Brother Eyring, conduct this session.

We extend our greetings to all who are in attendance or who are participating by means of television, radio, or the Internet, and to the many who are watching in stake centers in various parts of the world where the conference is being carried by satellite transmission.

The music for this session will be by a Primary choir from Kaysville and Fruit Heights, Utah, under the direction of Colleen Paddock, with Linda Margetts at the organ. The choir will open these services by singing "I Am a Child of God." The invocation will then be offered by Elder James M. Dunn of the Seventy.

The choir sang "I Am a Child of God."

Elder James M. Dunn offered the invocation.

President Eyring

President Monson has asked that I now present the General Authorities, Area Seventies, and general auxiliary presidencies of the Church for a sustaining vote. The choir will then sing "The Light Divine." Following the singing, Elders Joseph B. Wirthlin and Jeffrey R. Holland of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles will address us.

The Sustaining of Church Officers

President Henry B. Eyring

It is proposed that we sustain Thomas Spencer Monson as prophet, seer, and revelator and President of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints; Henry Bennion Eyring as First Counselor in the First Presidency; and Dieter Friedrich Uchtdorf as Second Counselor in the First Presidency. Those in favor may manifest it. Those opposed, if any, may manifest it.

It is proposed that we sustain Boyd Kenneth Packer as President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles and the following as members of that quorum: Boyd K. Packer, L. Tom Perry, Russell M. Nelson, Dallin H. Oaks, M. Russell Ballard,

Joseph B. Wirthlin, Richard G. Scott, Robert D. Hales, Jeffrey R. Holland, David A. Bednar, Quentin L. Cook, and D. Todd Christofferson. Those in favor, please manifest it. Any opposed may so indicate.

It is proposed that we sustain the counselors in the First Presidency and the Twelve Apostles as prophets, seers, and revelators. All in favor, please manifest it. Contrary, if there be any, by the same sign.

It is proposed that we release Elder Earl C. Tingey as a member of the Presidency of the Quorums of the Seventy and Elders Earl C. Tingey and Sheldon F. Child as members of the First Quorum

of the Seventy and designate them as emeritus General Authorities.

It is also proposed that we release Elders Gerald N. Lund and Robert R. Steuer as members of the Second Quorum of the Seventy. Those who wish to join us in expressing gratitude to these brethren for their excellent service, please manifest it.

It is proposed that Elders Jorge A. Rojas and T. La Mar Sleight be released as Area Seventies. Those desiring to join in an expression of gratitude to these brethren, please manifest it.

It is proposed that we sustain Elder Jay E. Jensen as a member of the Presidency of the Quorums of the Seventy. All

in favor, please manifest it. Those opposed, if any.

It is proposed that we sustain the other General Authorities, Area Seventies, and general auxiliary presidencies as presently constituted. Those in favor, please manifest it. Any opposed may manifest it.

President Monson, insofar as I have been able to observe, the voting in the Conference Center has been unanimous. Thank you, brothers and sisters, for your sustaining vote, your faith, devotion, and prayers.

The choir sang "The Light Divine."

Elder Joseph B. Wirthlin

Come what may, and love it

When I was young I loved playing sports, and I have many fond memories of those days. But not all of them are pleasant. I remember one day after my football team lost a tough game, I came home feeling discouraged. My mother was there. She listened to my sad story. She taught her children to trust in themselves and each other, not blame others for their misfortunes, and give their best effort in everything they attempted.

When we fell down, she expected us to pick ourselves up and get going again. So the advice my mother gave to me then wasn't altogether unexpected. It has stayed with me all my life.

"Joseph," she said, "come what may, and love it."

I have often reflected on that counsel.

I think she may have meant that every life has peaks and shadows and times when it seems that the birds don't sing and bells don't ring. Yet in spite of discouragement and adversity, those who are happiest seem to have a way of learning from

difficult times, becoming stronger, wiser, and happier as a result.

There may be some who think General Authorities rarely experience pain, suffering, or distress. If only that were true. While every man and woman on this stand today has experienced an abundant measure of joy, each also has drunk deeply from the cup of disappointment, sorrow, and loss. The Lord in His wisdom does not shield anyone from grief or sadness.

For me, the Lord has opened the windows of heaven and showered blessings upon my family beyond my ability to express. Yet like everyone else, I have had times in my life when it seemed that the heaviness of my heart might be greater than I could bear. During those times I think back to those tender days of my youth when great sorrows came at the losing end of a football game.

How little I knew then of what awaited me in later years. But whenever my steps led through seasons of sadness and sorrow, my mother's words often came back to me: "Come what may, and love it."

How can we love days that are filled with sorrow? We can't—at least not in the moment. I don't think my mother was suggesting that we suppress discouragement or deny the reality of pain. I don't think she was suggesting that we smother unpleasant truths beneath a cloak of pretended happiness. But I do believe that the way we react to adversity can be a major factor in how happy and successful we can be in life.

If we approach adversities wisely, our hardest times can be the times of greatest growth, which in turn can lead to times of greatest happiness.

Over the years I have learned a few things that have helped me through times of testing and trial. I would like to share them with you.

Learn to laugh

The first thing we can do is learn to laugh. Have you ever seen an angry driver who, when someone else makes a mistake, reacts as though that person has insulted his honor, his family, his dog, and his ancestors all the way back to Adam? Or have you had an encounter with an overhanging cupboard door left open at the wrong place and the wrong time which has been cursed, condemned, and avenged by a sore-headed victim?

There is an antidote for times such as these: learn to laugh.

I remember loading up our children in a station wagon and driving to Los Angeles. There were at least nine of us in the car, and we would invariably get lost. Instead of getting angry, we laughed. Every time we made a wrong turn, we laughed harder.

Getting lost was not an unusual occurrence for us. Once while heading south to Cedar City, Utah, we took a wrong turn and didn't realize it until two hours later when we saw the "Welcome to Nevada" signs. We didn't get angry. We laughed, and as a result, anger and resentment

rarely resulted. Our laughter created cherished memories for us.

I remember when one of our daughters went on a blind date. She was all dressed up and waiting for her date to arrive when the doorbell rang. In walked a man who seemed a little old, but she tried to be polite. She introduced him to me and my wife and the other children; then she put on her coat and went out the door. We watched as she got into the car, but the car didn't move. Eventually our daughter got out of the car and, red faced, ran back into the house. The man that she thought was her blind date had actually come to pick up another of our daughters who had agreed to be a babysitter for him and his wife.

We all had a good laugh over that. In fact, we couldn't stop laughing. Later, when our daughter's real blind date showed up, I couldn't come out to meet him because I was still in the kitchen laughing. Now, I realize that our daughter could have felt humiliated and embarrassed. But she laughed with us, and as a result, we still laugh about it today.

The next time you're tempted to groan, you might try to laugh instead. It will extend your life and make the lives of all those around you more enjoyable.

Seek for the eternal

The second thing we can do is seek for the eternal. You may feel singled out when adversity enters your life. You shake your head and wonder, "Why me?"

But the dial on the wheel of sorrow eventually points to each of us. At one time or another, everyone must experience sorrow. No one is exempt.

I love the scriptures because they show examples of great and noble men and women such as Abraham, Sarah, Enoch, Moses, Joseph, Emma, and Brigham. Each of them experienced adversity and sorrow that tried, fortified, and refined their characters.

Learning to endure times of disappointment, suffering, and sorrow is part of our on-the-job training. These experiences, while often difficult to bear at the time, are precisely the kinds of experiences that stretch our understanding, build our character, and increase our compassion for others.

Because Jesus Christ suffered greatly, He understands our suffering. He understands our grief. We experience hard things so that we too may have increased compassion and understanding for others.

Remember the sublime words of the Savior to the Prophet Joseph Smith when he suffered with his companions in the smothering darkness of Liberty Jail:

“My son, peace be unto thy soul; thine adversity and thine afflictions shall be but a small moment;

“And then, if thou endure it well, God shall exalt thee on high; thou shalt triumph over all thy foes.”¹

With that eternal perspective, Joseph took comfort from these words, and so can we. Sometimes the very moments that seem to overcome us with suffering are those that will ultimately suffer us to overcome.

The principle of compensation

The third thing we can do is understand the principle of compensation. The Lord compensates the faithful for every loss. That which is taken away from those who love the Lord will be added unto them in His own way. While it may not come at the time we desire, the faithful will know that every tear today will eventually be returned a hundredfold with tears of rejoicing and gratitude.

One of the blessings of the gospel is the knowledge that when the curtain of death signals the end of our mortal lives, life will continue on the other side of the veil. There we will be given new opportunities. Not even death can take from us

the eternal blessings promised by a loving Heavenly Father.

Because Heavenly Father is merciful, a principle of compensation prevails. I have seen this in my own life. My grandson Joseph has autism. It has been heartbreaking for his mother and father to come to grips with the implications of this affliction.

They knew that Joseph would probably never be like other children. They understood what that would mean not only for Joseph but for the family as well. But what a joy he has been to us. Autistic children often have a difficult time showing emotion, but every time I'm with him, Joseph gives me a big hug. While there have been challenges, he has filled our lives with joy.

Joseph's parents have encouraged him to participate in sports. When he first started playing baseball, he was in the outfield. But I don't think he grasped the need to run after loose balls. He thought of a much more efficient way to play the game. When a ball was hit in his direction, Joseph watched it go by and then pulled another baseball out of his pocket and threw that one to the pitcher.

Any reservations that his family may have had in raising Joseph, any sacrifices they have made have been compensated tenfold. Because of this choice spirit, his mother and father have learned much about children with disabilities. They have witnessed firsthand the generosity and compassion of family, neighbors, and friends. They have rejoiced together as Joseph has progressed. They have marveled at his goodness.

Trust in the Father and the Son

The fourth thing we can do is put our trust in our Heavenly Father and His Son, Jesus Christ.

“God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son.”² The Lord Jesus

Christ is our partner, helper, and advocate. He wants us to be happy. He wants us to be successful. If we do our part, He will step in.

He who descended below all things will come to our aid. He will comfort and uphold us. He will strengthen us in our weakness and fortify us in our distress. He will make weak things become strong.³

One of our daughters, after giving birth to a baby, became seriously ill. We prayed for her, administered to her, and supported her as best we could. We hoped she would receive a blessing of healing, but days turned into months, and months turned into years. At one point I told her that this affliction might be something she would have to struggle with the rest of her life.

One morning I remember pulling out a small card and threading it through my typewriter. Among the words that I typed for her were these: “The simple secret is this: put your trust in the Lord, do your best, then leave the rest to Him.”

She did put her trust in God. But her affliction did not disappear. For years she suffered, but in due course the Lord blessed her, and eventually she returned to health.

Knowing this daughter, I believe that even if she had never found relief, yet she would have trusted in her Heavenly Father and “[left] the rest to Him.”

Adversity can be a blessing

Although my mother has long since passed to her eternal reward, her words are always with me. I still remember her advice to me given on that day long ago when my team lost a football game:

“Come what may, and love it.”

I know why there must be opposition in all things. Adversity, if handled correctly, can be a blessing in our lives. We can learn to love it.

As we look for humor, seek for the eternal perspective, understand the principle of compensation, and draw near to our Heavenly Father, we can endure hardship and trial. We can say, as did my mother, “Come what may, and love it.” Of this I testify in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

1. Doctrine and Covenants 121:7–8.
2. John 3:16.
3. See Ether 12:27.

Elder Jeffrey R. Holland

The ministry of angels

When Adam and Eve willingly stepped into mortality, they knew this telestial world would contain thorns and thistles and troubles of every kind. Perhaps their most challenging realization, however, was not the hardship and danger they would endure but the fact that they would now be distanced from God, separated from Him with whom they had walked and talked, who had given them face-to-face counsel. After this conscious choice, as the record of creation says, “they saw him not; for they were shut out from his presence.”¹

Amidst all else that must have troubled them, surely this must have troubled them the most.

But God knew the challenges they would face, and He certainly knew how lonely and troubled they would sometimes feel. So He watched over His mortal family constantly, heard their prayers always, and sent prophets (and later apostles) to teach, counsel, and guide them. But in times of special need, He sent angels, divine messengers, to bless His children and reassure them that heaven was always very close and that His help was always very near. Indeed, shortly after Adam and Eve

found themselves in the lone and dreary world, an angel appeared unto them,² who taught them the meaning of their sacrifice and the atoning role of the promised Redeemer who was to come.

When the time for this Savior's advent was at hand, an angel was sent to announce to Mary that she was to be the mother of the Son of God.³ Then a host of angels was commissioned to sing on the night the baby Jesus was born.⁴ Shortly thereafter an angel would announce to Joseph that the newborn baby was in danger and that this little family must flee to Egypt for safety.⁵ When it was safe to return, an angel conveyed that information to the family and the three returned to the land of their heritage.⁶

Angels as God's emissaries

From the beginning down through the dispensations, God has used angels as His emissaries in conveying love and concern for His children. Time in this setting does not allow even a cursory examination of the scriptures or our own latter-day history, which are so filled with accounts of angels ministering to those on earth, but it is rich doctrine and rich history indeed.

Usually such beings are *not* seen. Sometimes they are. But seen or unseen, they are *always* near. Sometimes their assignments are very grand and have significance for the whole world. Sometimes the messages are more private. Occasionally the angelic purpose is to warn. But most often it is to comfort, to provide some form of merciful attention, guidance in difficult times. When in Lehi's dream he found himself in a frightening place, "a dark and dreary waste," as he described it, he was met by an angel, "a man . . . dressed in a white robe; . . . he spake unto me," Lehi said, "and bade me follow him."⁷ Lehi did follow him to safety and ultimately to the path of salvation.

Angels are still sent to help us

In the course of life all of us spend time in "dark and dreary" places, wildernesses, circumstances of sorrow or fear or discouragement. Our present day is filled with global distress over financial crises, energy problems, terrorist attacks, and natural calamities. These translate into individual and family concerns not only about homes in which to live and food available to eat but also about the ultimate safety and well-being of our children and the latter-day prophecies about our planet.

More serious than these—and sometimes related to them—are matters of ethical, moral, and spiritual decay seen in populations large and small, at home and abroad. But I testify that angels are *still* sent to help *us*, even as they were sent to help Adam and Eve, to help the prophets, and indeed to help the Savior of the world Himself. Matthew records in his gospel that after Satan had tempted Christ in the wilderness, "angels came and ministered unto him."⁸ Even the Son of God, a God Himself, had need for heavenly comfort during His sojourn in mortality. And so such ministrations will be to the righteous until the end of time. As Mormon said to his son Moroni, who would one day *be* an angel:

"Has the day of miracles ceased?

"Or have angels ceased to appear unto the children of men? Or has he withheld the power of the Holy Ghost from them? Or will he, so long as time shall last, or the earth shall stand, or there shall be one man upon the face thereof to be saved?

"Behold I say unto you, Nay; for . . . it is by faith that angels appear and minister unto men."

"For behold, they are subject unto [Christ], to minister according to the word of his command, showing themselves unto them of strong faith and a firm mind in every form of godliness."⁹

I ask everyone within the sound of my voice to take heart, be filled with faith, and remember that the Lord has said He “would fight [our] battles, [our] children’s battles, and [the battles of our] children’s children.”¹⁰ And what do we do to merit such a defense? We are to “search diligently, pray always, and be believing, and [then] all things shall work together for [our] good, if [we] walk uprightly and remember the covenant wherewith [we] have covenanted.”¹¹ The latter days are *not* a time to fear and tremble. They *are* a time to be believing and remember our covenants.

Mortal angels

I have spoken here of heavenly help, of angels dispatched to bless us in time of need. But when we speak of those who are instruments in the hand of God, we are reminded that not all angels are from the other side of the veil. Some of them we walk with and talk with—here, now, every day. Some of them reside in our own neighborhoods. Some of them gave birth to us, and in my case, one of them consented to marry me.

Young Clyn Barrus crosses the river

Indeed, heaven never seems closer than when we see the love of God manifested in the kindness and devotion of people so good and so pure that *angelic* is the only word that comes to mind. Elder James Dunn, from this pulpit just moments ago, used that word in his invocation to describe this Primary choir—and why not? With the spirit, faces, and voices of those children in our mind and before our eyes, may I share with you an account by my friend and BYU colleague, the late Clyn D. Barrus. I do so with the permission of his wife, Marilyn, and their family.

Referring to his childhood on a large Idaho farm, Brother Barrus spoke of his nightly assignment to round up the cows

at milking time. Because the cows pastured in a field bordered by the occasionally treacherous Teton River, the strict rule in the Barrus household was that during the spring flood season, the children were *never* to go after any cows who ventured across the river. They were always to return home and seek mature help.

One Saturday just after his seventh birthday, Brother Barrus’s parents promised the family a night at the movies if the chores were done on time. But when young Clyn arrived at the pasture, the cows he sought had crossed the river, even though it was running at high flood stage. Knowing his rare night at the movies was in jeopardy, he decided to go after the cows himself, even though he had been warned many times never to do so.

As the seven-year-old urged his old horse, Banner, down into the cold, swift stream, the horse’s head barely cleared the water. An adult sitting on the horse would have been safe, but at Brother Barrus’s tender age, the current completely covered him except when the horse lunged forward several times, bringing Clyn’s head above water just enough to gasp for air.

“Son, I’ve been looking for you”

Here I turn to Brother Barrus’s own words:

“When Banner finally climbed the other bank, I realized that my life had been in grave danger and that I had done a terrible thing—I had knowingly disobeyed my father. I felt that I could redeem myself only by bringing the cows home safely. Maybe then my father would forgive me. But it was already dusk, and I didn’t know for sure where I was. Despair overwhelmed me. I was wet and cold, lost and afraid.

“I climbed down from old Banner, fell to the ground by his feet, and began to cry. Between thick sobs, I tried to offer

a prayer, repeating over and over to my Father in Heaven, 'I'm sorry. Forgive me! I'm sorry. Forgive me!'

"I prayed for a long time. When I finally looked up, I saw through my tears a figure dressed in white walking toward me. In the dark, I felt certain it must be an angel sent in answer to my prayers. I did not move or make a sound as the figure approached, so overwhelmed was I by what I saw. Would the Lord really send an angel to me, who had been so disobedient?"

"Then a familiar voice said, 'Son, I've been looking for you.' In the darkness I recognized the voice of my father and ran to his outstretched arms. He held me tightly, then said gently, 'I was worried. I'm glad I found you.'

"I tried to tell him how sorry I was, but only disjointed words came out of my trembling lips—'Thank you . . . darkness . . . afraid . . . river . . . alone.' Later that night I learned that when I had not returned from the pasture, my father had come looking for me. When neither I nor the cows were to be found, he knew I had crossed the river and was in danger. Because it was dark and time was of the essence, he removed his clothes down to his long white thermal underwear, tied his shoes around his neck, and swam a treacherous river to rescue a wayward son."¹²

God never leaves us alone

My beloved brothers and sisters, I testify of angels, both the heavenly and the mortal kind. In doing so I am testifying that God never leaves us alone, never leaves us unaided in the challenges that we face. "[Nor] will he, so long as time shall last, or the earth shall stand, or there shall be one man [or woman or child] upon the face thereof to be saved."¹³ On occasions, global or personal, we may feel that we are distanced from God, shut out from heaven, lost, alone in dark and dreary places. Often enough that distress can be

of our own making, but even then the Father of us all is watching and assisting. And always there are those angels who come and go all around us, seen and unseen, known and unknown, mortal and immortal.

May we all believe more readily in, and have more gratitude for, the Lord's promise as contained in one of President Monson's favorite scriptures: "I will go before your face. I will be on your right hand and on your left, . . . my Spirit shall be in your [heart], and mine angels round about you, to bear you up."¹⁴

In the process of praying for those angels to attend us, may we all try to be a little more angelic ourselves—with a kind word, a strong arm, a declaration of faith and "the covenant wherewith [we] have covenanted."¹⁵ Perhaps then *we* can be emissaries sent from God when someone, perhaps a Primary child, is crying, "Darkness . . . afraid . . . river . . . alone." To this end I pray in the sacred name of Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

1. Moses 5:4.
2. See Moses 5:6–8.
3. See Luke 1:26–38.
4. See Luke 2:8–14.
5. See Matthew 2:13–15.
6. See Matthew 2:19–23.
7. 1 Nephi 8:7, 5–6.
8. Matthew 4:11.
9. Moroni 7:35–37, 30.
10. Doctrine and Covenants 98:37.
11. Doctrine and Covenants 90:24.
12. See Clyn D. Barrus, "Coming Home," *Friend*, Apr. 1995, 2–4.
13. Moroni 7:36.
14. Doctrine and Covenants 84:88.
15. Doctrine and Covenants 90:24.

President Eyring

The choir and the congregation will now sing, with greater faith because of the wonderful testimony of Elder Holland, "Teach Me to Walk in the Light."

At the conclusion of the singing, Elders Gérald Caussé and Lawrence E. Corbridge of the Seventy will address us. They will be followed by Elder D. Todd Christofferson of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles.

The choir and congregation sang
“Teach Me to Walk in the Light.”

Elder Gérald Caussé

The most important knowledge

Parents are often taken aback by the replies their children make to questions from grown-ups. One evening when my wife and I were away, our children’s babysitter, intrigued by the prayer she heard them saying, asked them this question: “But what is the difference between your religion and mine?” The reply from our eight-year-old daughter was immediate: “It’s almost the same, except that we study a lot more than you do!” Far from wanting to offend her babysitter, my daughter just wanted to underline in her own way the importance that Latter-day Saints attach to the search for knowledge.

Joseph Smith declared, “It is impossible for a man to be saved in ignorance” (D&C 131:6). He added, “The principle of knowledge is the principle of salvation . . . ; and every one that does not obtain knowledge sufficient to be saved will be condemned” (*History of the Church*, 5:387). This knowledge is founded on understanding the nature of God and Jesus Christ and the plan of salvation that They have prepared to allow us to return to Their presence. “And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent” (John 17:3).

Even a child can understand

The principle of knowledge has often been misinterpreted by men. “The glory

of God is intelligence” (D&C 93:36). It surpasses all we can ever understand with our intellectual capacities. People who try to find God sometimes think that they have to look for Him in intellectually complicated concepts.

However, our Heavenly Father is always available to us. He adapts to our level of understanding. “If He comes to a little child, He will adapt himself to the language and capacity of a little child” (Joseph Smith, in *History of the Church*, 3:392).

God would indeed be unjust if the gospel were accessible only to an intellectual elite. In His goodness, He has ensured that the truths regarding God are understandable to all of His children, whatever their level of education or intellectual faculty.

In reality, the fact that a principle can be understood even by a child is proof of its power. President John Taylor said, “It is true intelligence for a man to take a subject that is mysterious and great in itself and to unfold and simplify it so that a child can understand it” (*Deseret News*, Sept. 30, 1857, 238). Far from diminishing its impact, purity and simplicity of expression allow the Holy Spirit to witness with greater certainty to the hearts of men.

Simplicity of the Savior’s teachings

During His earthly ministry, Jesus constantly compared the simplicity and authenticity of His teachings to the tortuous logic of the Pharisees and other doctors of the law. They tried time and again

to test Him with sophisticated questions, but His replies were always crystal clear and childlike in their simplicity.

One day Jesus's disciples asked Him the following question: "Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?"

Jesus, having summoned a little child, set him in the midst of them and said:

"Verily I say unto you, Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven.

"Whosoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven" (Matthew 18:1, 2–4).

On another occasion Jesus said, "I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes" (Luke 10:21).

The Bible has probably been the subject of more interpretations and philosophical debates than any other book. However, a child who reads this book for the first time will have at least as much, if not more, chance to understand the doctrine as the majority of those doctors of the scriptures. The Savior's teachings are adapted to everyone. At eight years of age a child can have sufficient understanding to enter the waters of baptism and make a covenant with God with complete understanding.

What would a child understand from reading the story of the baptism of Jesus? Jesus was baptized in the river Jordan by John the Baptist. The Holy Ghost descended upon Him "in a bodily shape like a dove." A voice was heard: "Thou art my beloved Son; in thee I am well pleased" (Luke 3:22). The child would have a clear vision of what the Godhead is: three distinct persons in complete unity—God the Father; His Son, Jesus Christ; and the Holy Ghost.

Dangers of rejecting simplicity

Rejection of the principle of simplicity and clarity has been the origin of many apostasies, both collective and individual. In the Book of Mormon, the prophet Jacob denounced those in ancient times who "despised the words of plainness, and killed the prophets, and sought for things that they could not understand. Wherefore, because of their blindness, which blindness came by looking beyond the mark, they must needs fall; for God hath taken away his plainness from them, and delivered unto them many things which they cannot understand, because they desired it" (Jacob 4:14).

Sometimes we may be tempted to think, "It's too easy," just like Naaman, the Syrian captain who, constrained by his pride, hesitated to obey the counsel of Elisha, which was too simple, in his eyes, to cure his leprosy. His servants led him to see his folly:

"My father, if the prophet had bid thee do some great thing, wouldest thou not have done it? how much rather then, when he saith to thee, Wash, and be clean?"

"Then went he down, and dipped himself seven times in Jordan, according to the saying of the man of God: and his flesh came again like unto the flesh of a little child, and he was clean" (2 Kings 5:13–14).

His cleansing was not only physical; his spiritual flesh also was cleansed when he accepted this beautiful lesson in humility.

Qualities that help us learn by the Spirit

Little children have a marvelous disposition to learn. They have total trust in their teacher, a pure spirit, and great humility—in other words, the same qualities which open the door to the Holy Spirit. He is the channel through whom we gain knowledge of the things of the Spirit. Paul

wrote to the Corinthians, “Even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God” (1 Corinthians 2:11).

And he added, “But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned” (1 Corinthians 2:14).

We know that the carnal or natural man is “an enemy to God . . . unless he yields to the enticings of the Holy Spirit.” For that, he must become “as a child, submissive, meek, humble, patient, full of love, willing to submit to all things which the Lord seeth fit to inflict upon him, even as a child doth submit to his father” (Mosiah 3:19).

Open hearts to hear, practice God’s word

In his philosophical short story *The Little Prince*, Antoine de Saint-Exupéry describes the confusion of a little boy who, on discovering a field of roses, perceives that the flower he has, which he has tended with such love, is not unique but very ordinary. Then he comes to the realization that the thing that makes his rose unique is not its outward appearance but the time and the love he has consecrated to taking care of it. He exclaims:

“Men . . . raise five thousand roses in the same garden—and they do not find in it what they are looking for. . . .

“And yet what they are looking for could be found in one single rose, or in a little water. . . .

“But the eyes are blind. One must look with the heart” ([1943], 79).

In the same way, our knowledge of God does not depend on the amount of

information we accumulate. After all, all the knowledge of the gospel that is meaningful for our salvation can be summarized in a few points of doctrine, principles, and essential commandments, which are already there in the missionary lessons we receive before baptism. Knowing God is a matter of opening our hearts to gain a spiritual understanding and a fervent testimony of the truth of these few fundamental points of doctrine. Knowing God is having a testimony of His existence and feeling in one’s heart that He loves us. It is accepting Jesus Christ as our Savior and having a fervent desire to follow His example. In serving God and our neighbor, we witness of Christ and allow those around us to get to know Him better.

These principles find concrete application in the teaching which is given in our wards and branches. For you teachers of the Church, the principal goal of your lessons is the conversion of hearts. The quality of a lesson is not measured by the number of new pieces of information that you give to your students. It comes from your capacity to invite the presence of the Spirit and to motivate your students to make commitments. It is by exercising their faith by putting into practice the lessons taught that they will increase their spiritual knowledge.

I pray that we will know how to open our hearts like a little child and take pleasure in hearing and practicing the word of God in all the power of its simplicity. I bear testimony that if we do this, we will gain the knowledge of the “mysteries [of God] and [the] peaceable things—that which bringeth joy, that which bringeth life eternal” (D&C 42:61). In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

Elder Lawrence E. Corbridge

Jesus Christ is the Way

"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. . . .

"In him was life; and the life was the light of men."¹

He said, "I am Alpha and Omega, Christ the Lord; yea, even I am he, the beginning and the end, the Redeemer of the world."²

He said, "Whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life."³

He said, "I am the bread of life: he that cometh to me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on me shall never thirst."⁴

He said, "I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life."⁵

He said, "I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: and whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die."⁶

He said, "I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me."⁷

Jesus Christ is the Way. He is Light and Life, Bread and Water, the Beginning and the End, the Resurrection and the Life, the Savior of the world, the Truth, and the Way.

There is only one way to happiness and fulfillment. He is the Way. Every other way, any other way, whatever other way, is foolishness.

He offers a well of living water. Either we drink and never thirst more, or we don't and foolishly remain thirsty still.

He is the Bread of Life. Either we eat and hunger no more, or we don't and foolishly remain weak and hungry still.

He is the Light of the World. Either we follow Him and see clearly, or we don't

and foolishly remain blind and in darkness still.

He is the Resurrection and the Life. He said, "The words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life."⁸ Either we learn of Him and have life more abundantly,⁹ or we don't and foolishly remain dead still.

He is the Savior of the world. Either we accept the blessings of His Atonement and are made clean and pure, worthy to have His Spirit, or we don't and foolishly remain alone and filthy still.

He is the Way.

No other God

"We believe in God, the Eternal Father, and in His Son, Jesus Christ, and in the Holy Ghost."¹⁰ The plan of the Father was implemented by the Son that we may have the Spirit of the Holy Ghost. The way of the Father is the way of the Son. He said, "Thou shalt have no other gods before me."¹¹

Only God can bless us. Only He can sustain us. Only He can cause our hearts to beat and give us breath. Only He can preserve and protect us. Only He can give us strength to bear up the burdens of life. Only He can give us power, knowledge, peace, and joy. Only He can forgive our sins. Only He can heal us. Only He can change us and forge a godly soul. Only He can bring us back into His presence. And He will do all of that and much more if we but remember Him to keep His commandments. What, then, shall we do? We will remember Him to keep His commandments. It is the only intelligent thing to do.

Jesus baptizes with the Holy Ghost

John the Baptist said that while he baptized with water, Jesus baptized "with the Holy Ghost."¹²

Nothing in this life is of greater worth than the supernal gift of the Holy Ghost. It is the source of joy, peace, knowledge, strength, love, and every other good thing. With the Atonement, it is the power by which we may be changed and made strong where we are weak. With the priesthood, it is the power by which marriages and families are sealed together eternally.¹³ It is the power by which the Lord makes Himself manifest unto those who believe in Him.¹⁴ Every good thing depends on getting and keeping the power of the Holy Ghost in our lives. Everything depends on that.

To that end, Jesus Christ entered a garden called Gethsemane, where He overcame sin for us. He took upon Himself our sins. He suffered the penalty of our wrongs. He paid the price of our education. I don't know how He did what He did. I only know that He did and that because He did, you and I may be forgiven of our sins that we may be endowed with His power. Everything depends on that. What, then, shall we do? We will "take upon [us] the name of [the] Son, and always remember him and keep his commandments which he has given [us]; that [we] may always have his Spirit to be with [us]."¹⁵ Everything depends on that.

My yoke is easy, and my burden is light

One of the most popular and attractive philosophies of men is to live life your own way—do your own thing, be yourself, don't let others tell you what to do. But the Lord said, "I am the way."¹⁶ He said, "Follow me."¹⁷ He said, "What manner of men ought ye to be? Verily I say unto you, even as I am."¹⁸

Don't think you can't. We might think we can't really follow Him because the standard of His life is so astonishingly high as to seem unreachable. We might think it is too hard, too high, too much, beyond our capacity, at least for now. Don't

ever believe that. While the standard of the Lord is the highest, don't ever think it is only reachable by a select few who are most able.

In this singular instance, life's experience misleads us. In life we learn that the highest achievements in any human endeavor are always the most difficult and, therefore, achievable by only a select few who are most able. The higher the standard, the fewer can reach it.

But that is not the case here because, unlike every other experience in this life, this is not a human endeavor. It is, rather, the work of God. It is God's work and it is His glory "to bring to pass the immortality and eternal life of man."¹⁹ There is nothing else like it. Not anywhere. Not ever.

No institution, plan, program, or system ever conceived by men has access to the redeeming and transforming power of the Atonement of Jesus Christ and the gift of the Holy Ghost. Therefore, while the Lord's invitation to follow Him is the highest of all, it is also achievable by everyone, not because we are able, but because He is, and because He can make us able too. "We believe that through the Atonement of Christ, all mankind [everyone, living and dead] may be saved, by obedience to the laws and ordinances of the Gospel."²⁰

The Lord's way is not hard. Life is hard, not the gospel. "There is an opposition in all things,"²¹ everywhere, for everyone. Life is hard for all of us, but life is also simple. We have only two choices.²² We can either follow the Lord and be endowed with His power and have peace, light, strength, knowledge, confidence, love, and joy, or we can go some other way, any other way, whatever other way, and go it alone—without His support, without His power, without guidance, in darkness, turmoil, doubt, grief, and despair. And I ask, which way is easier?

He said:

“Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.

“Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; . . . and ye shall find rest unto your souls.

“For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.”²³

Life is hard, but life is simple. Get on the path and never, ever give up. You never give up. You just keep on going. You don’t quit, and you will make it.

There is only one way to happiness and fulfillment. Jesus Christ is the Way. Every other way, any other way, whatever other way is foolishness.

I bear record of Him, even Jesus Christ, that He is the Son of the living God, He is the Bread of Life, He is the Truth, He is the Resurrection and the Life, He is the Savior and the Light of the World. He is the Way, the only Way.

May we have the good sense to follow Him. In His holy name, even Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

1. John 1:1, 4.
2. Doctrine and Covenants 19:1.
3. John 4:14.
4. John 6:35.
5. John 8:12.
6. John 11:25–26.
7. John 14:6.
8. John 6:63.
9. See John 10:10.
10. Articles of Faith 1:1.
11. Exodus 20:3.
12. John 1:33.
13. See Doctrine and Covenants 132:7, 19.
14. See 2 Nephi 26:13.
15. Doctrine and Covenants 20:77.
16. John 14:6.
17. Mark 8:34.
18. 3 Nephi 27:27.
19. Moses 1:39.
20. Articles of Faith 1:3.
21. 2 Nephi 2:11.
22. See Moroni 7:15–17.
23. Matthew 11:28–30.

Elder D. Todd Christofferson

The building up of Zion

The Prophet Joseph Smith said: “The building up of Zion is a cause that has interested the people of God in every age; it is a theme upon which prophets, priests and kings have dwelt with peculiar delight; they have looked forward with joyful anticipation to the day in which we live; and fired with heavenly and joyful anticipations they have sung and written and prophesied of this our day; but they died without the sight; we are the favored people that God has made choice of to bring about the Latter-day glory” (*History of the Church*, 4:609–10).

Zion is both a place and a people. Zion was the name given to the ancient city of Enoch in the days before the Flood.

“And it came to pass in his days, that he built a city that was called the City of Holiness, even Zion” (Moses 7:19). This Zion endured for some 365 years (see Moses 7:68). The scriptural record states, “And Enoch and all his people walked with God, and he dwelt in the midst of Zion; and it came to pass that Zion was not, for God received it up into his own bosom; and from thence went forth the saying, Zion is fled” (Moses 7:69). Later, Jerusalem and its temple were called Mount Zion, and the scriptures prophesy of a future New Jerusalem where Christ shall reign as “King of Zion,” when “for the space of a thousand years the earth shall rest” (Moses 7:53, 64).

The Lord called Enoch’s people Zion “because they were of one heart and one

mind, and dwelt in righteousness; and there was no poor among them” (Moses 7:18). Elsewhere He said, “For this is Zion—the pure in heart” (D&C 97:21).

Go ye out of Babylon

The antithesis and antagonist of Zion is Babylon. The city of Babylon was originally Babel, of Tower of Babel fame, and later became the capital of the Babylonian empire. Its principal edifice was the temple of Bel, or Baal, the idol referred to by Old Testament prophets as “The Shame,” given the sexual perversions that were associated with its worship. (See Bible Dictionary, “Assyria and Babylonia,” 615–16; “Baal,” 617–18; “Babylon or Babel,” 618.) Its worldliness, its worship of evil, and the captivity of Judah there following the conquest of 587 B.C. all combine to make Babylon the symbol of decadent societies and spiritual bondage.

It is with this backdrop that the Lord said to the members of His Church, “Go ye out of Babylon; gather ye out from among the nations, from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other” (D&C 133:7). He called for the elders of His Church to be sent forth across the world to accomplish this gathering, commencing an effort that continues in full vigor today:

“And behold, and lo, this shall be their cry, and the voice of the Lord unto all people: Go ye forth unto the land of Zion, that the borders of my people may be enlarged, and that her stakes may be strengthened, and that Zion may go forth unto the regions round about” (D&C 133:9).

Beacons of righteousness to gather Zion

And so today the Lord’s people are gathering “out from among the nations” as they gather into the congregations and stakes of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints that are scattered throughout the nations. Nephi foresaw that these “dominions” would be small

but that the Lord’s power would descend “upon the saints of the church of the Lamb, . . . who were scattered upon all the face of the earth; and they [would be] armed with righteousness” (see 1 Nephi 14:12–14). The Lord calls upon us to be beacons of righteousness to guide those who seek the safety and blessings of Zion:

“Verily I say unto you all: Arise and shine forth, that thy light may be a standard for the nations;

“And that the gathering together upon the land of Zion, and upon her stakes, may be for a defense, and for a refuge from the storm, and from wrath when it shall be poured out without mixture upon the whole earth” (D&C 115:5–6).

Early efforts to establish Zion

Under the direction of the Prophet Joseph Smith, early members of the Church attempted to establish the center place of Zion in Missouri, but they did not qualify to build the holy city. The Lord explained one of the reasons for their failure:

“They have not learned to be obedient to the things which I required at their hands, but are full of all manner of evil, and do not impart of their substance, as becometh saints, to the poor and afflicted among them;

“And are not united according to the union required by the law of the celestial kingdom” (D&C 105:3–4).

“There were jarrings, and contentions, and envyings, and strifes, and lustful and covetous desires among them; therefore by these things they polluted their inheritances” (D&C 101:6).

Rising to the standard of Zion

Rather than judge these early Saints too harshly, however, we should look to ourselves to see if we are doing any better.

Zion is Zion because of the character, attributes, and faithfulness of her citizens. Remember, “the Lord called his people

Zion, because they were of one heart and one mind, and dwelt in righteousness; and there was no poor among them” (Moses 7:18). If we would establish Zion in our homes, branches, wards, and stakes, we must rise to this standard. It will be necessary (1) to become unified in one heart and one mind; (2) to become, individually and collectively, a holy people; and (3) to care for the poor and needy with such effectiveness that we eliminate poverty among us. We cannot wait until Zion comes for these things to happen—Zion will come only as they happen.

Become unified in heart and mind

As we consider the unity required for Zion to flourish, we should ask ourselves if we have overcome jarrings, contentions, envyings, and strifes (see D&C 101:6). Are we individually and as a people free from strife and contention and united “according to the union required by the law of the celestial kingdom”? (D&C 105:4). Forgiveness of one another is essential to this unity. Jesus said, “I, the Lord, will forgive whom I will forgive, but of you it is required to forgive all men” (D&C 64:10).

We will become of one heart and one mind as we individually place the Savior at the center of our lives and follow those He has commissioned to lead us. We can unite with President Thomas S. Monson in love and concern for one another. In general conference last April, President Monson spoke to those estranged from the Church and to all of us when he said:

“In the private sanctuary of one’s own conscience lies that spirit, that determination to cast off the old person and to measure up to the stature of true potential. In this spirit, we again issue that heartfelt invitation: Come back. We reach out to you in the pure love of Christ and express our desire to assist you and to welcome you into full fellowship. To those who are wounded in spirit or who are struggling and fearful, we say, Let us lift you and

cheer you and calm your fears” (in Conference Report, Apr. 2008, 88; or *Ensign*, May 2008, 90).

At the end of July this year, young single adults from several countries in eastern Europe gathered outside Budapest, Hungary, for a conference. Among this group were 20 young men and women from Moldova who had spent days obtaining passports and visas and over 30 hours traveling by bus to get there. The conference program included some 15 workshops. Each person needed to select the two or three that he or she most wanted to attend. Rather than focus exclusively on their own interests, these Moldovan young adults got together and made plans so that at least one of their group would be in each class and take copious notes. Then they would share what they had learned with each other and later with the young adults in Moldova who could not attend. In its simplest form, this exemplifies the unity and love for one another that, multiplied thousands of times in different ways, will “bring again Zion” (Isaiah 52:8).

Become a holy people

Much of the work to be done in establishing Zion consists in our individual efforts to become “the pure in heart” (D&C 97:21). “Zion cannot be built up unless it is by the principles of the law of the celestial kingdom,” said the Lord; “otherwise I cannot receive her unto myself” (D&C 105:5). The law of the celestial kingdom is, of course, the gospel law and covenants, which include our constant remembrance of the Savior and our pledge of obedience, sacrifice, consecration, and fidelity.

The Savior was critical of some of the early Saints for their “lustful . . . desires” (D&C 101:6; see also D&C 88:121). These were people who lived in a non-television, non-film, non-Internet, non-iPod world. In a world now awash in sexualized images and music, are we free from lustful desires and their attendant evils? Far

from pushing the limits of modest dress or indulging in the vicarious immorality of pornography, we are to hunger and thirst after righteousness. To come to Zion, it is not enough for you or me to be somewhat less wicked than others. We are to become not only good but holy men and women. Recalling Elder Neal A. Maxwell's phrase, let us once and for all establish our residence in Zion and give up the summer cottage in Babylon (see Neal A. Maxwell, *A Wonderful Flood of Light* [1990], 47).

Care for the poor and needy

Throughout history the Lord has measured societies and individuals by how well they cared for the poor. He has said:

"For the earth is full, and there is enough and to spare; yea, I prepared all things, and have given unto the children of men to be agents unto themselves.

"Therefore, if any man shall take of the abundance which I have made, and impart not his portion, according to the law of my gospel, unto the poor and the needy, he shall, with the wicked, lift up his eyes in hell, being in torment" (D&C 104:17–18; see also D&C 56:16–17).

Furthermore, He declares, "In your temporal things you shall be equal, and this not grudgingly, otherwise the abundance of the manifestations of the Spirit shall be withheld" (D&C 70:14; see also D&C 49:20; 78:5–7).

We control the disposition of our means and resources, but we account to God for this stewardship over earthly things. It is gratifying to witness your generosity as you contribute to fast offerings and humanitarian projects. Over the years, the suffering of millions has been alleviated, and countless others have been enabled to help themselves through the generosity of the Saints. Nevertheless, as we pursue the cause of Zion, each of us should prayerfully consider whether we are doing what we should and all that we

should in the Lord's eyes with respect to the poor and the needy.

We might ask ourselves, living as many of us do in societies that worship possessions and pleasures, whether we are remaining aloof from covetousness and the lust to acquire more and more of this world's goods. Materialism is just one more manifestation of the idolatry and pride that characterize Babylon. Perhaps we can learn to be content with what is sufficient for our needs.

The Apostle Paul warned Timothy against people who suppose "that gain is godliness" (1 Timothy 6:5).

Said he: "We brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out. And having food and raiment let us be therewith content" (1 Timothy 6:7–8).

In much of the world, we are entering upon unsettled economic times. Let us look after one another the very best we can. I remember the story of a Vietnamese family that fled Saigon in 1975 and ended up living in a small mobile home in Provo, Utah. A young man in the refugee family became the home teaching companion to a Brother Johnson who lived nearby with his large family. The boy related the following:

"One day Brother Johnson noticed that our family had no kitchen table. He appeared the next day with an odd-looking but very functional table that fit nicely against the trailer wall across from the kitchen sink and counters. I say odd-looking because two of the table legs matched the tabletop and two did not. Also, several small wooden pegs stuck out along one edge of the worn surface.

"Soon we used this unique table daily for food preparation and for eating some quick meals. We still ate our family meals while we sat on the floor . . . in true Vietnamese fashion.

"One evening I stood inside Brother Johnson's front door as I waited for him

before a home teaching appointment. There in the nearby kitchen—I was surprised to see it—was a table practically identical to the one they had given to my family. The only difference was that where our table had pegs, the Johnsons' table had holes! I then realized that, seeing our need, this charitable man had cut his kitchen table in half and had built two new legs for each half.

"It was obvious that the Johnson family could not fit around this small piece of furniture—they probably didn't fit comfortably around it when it was whole. . . .

"Throughout my life this kind act has been a powerful reminder of true giving" (Son Quang Le, as told to Beth Ellis Le, "Two-of-a-Kind Table," *Ensign*, July 2004, 63).

Come to Zion

The Prophet Joseph Smith said, "We ought to have the building up of Zion as our greatest object" (*History of the Church*, 3:390). In our families and in our stakes and districts, let us seek to build up Zion through unity, godliness, and charity, preparing for that great day when Zion, the New Jerusalem, will arise. In the words of our hymn:

Israel, Israel, God is calling,
Calling thee from lands of woe.
Babylon the great is falling;
God shall all her tow'rs o'erthrow. . . .

Come to Zion, come to Zion,
And within her walls rejoice. . . .

Come to Zion, come to Zion,
For your coming Lord is nigh.
["Israel, Israel, God Is Calling,"
Hymns, no. 7]

I bear witness of Jesus Christ, the King of Zion, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

President Eyring

We remind the brethren of the general priesthood meeting, which will commence in the Conference Center this evening at 6:00 mountain daylight time.

The nationwide Tabernacle Choir broadcast tomorrow morning will be from 9:30 to 10:00 a.m. mountain daylight time. The Sunday morning session of conference will immediately follow.

We thank the Primary choir for the beautiful music they have provided this afternoon. They will now sing "I Love to See the Temple."

Our concluding speaker at this session will be Elder David A. Bednar of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. Following his remarks, the choir will sing "We Thank Thee, O God, for a Prophet." The benediction will then be offered by Elder Don R. Clarke of the Seventy.

The choir sang "I Love to See the Temple."

Elder David A. Bednar

My message in the last general conference focused upon the gospel principle of asking in faith in prayer. Today I want to discuss three additional principles that can help our prayers become more meaningful, and I pray for the assistance of the Holy Ghost for me and for you.

Counsel with the Lord in all our doings

Principle #1. Prayer becomes more meaningful as we counsel with the Lord in all our doings (see Alma 37:37).

Simply stated, prayer is communication to Heavenly Father from His sons and daughters on earth. "As soon as we learn

the true relationship in which we stand toward God (namely, God is our Father, and we are his children), then at once prayer becomes natural and instinctive on our part” (Bible Dictionary, “Prayer,” 752). We are commanded to pray always to the Father in the name of the Son (see 3 Nephi 18:19–20). We are promised that if we pray sincerely for that which is right and good and in accordance with God’s will, we can be blessed, protected, and directed (see 3 Nephi 18:20; D&C 19:38).

Revelation is communication from Heavenly Father to His children on earth. As we ask in faith, we can receive revelation upon revelation and knowledge upon knowledge and come to know the mysteries and peaceable things that bring joy and eternal life (see D&C 42:61). The mysteries are those matters that can only be known and understood by the power of the Holy Ghost (see Harold B. Lee, *Ye Are the Light of the World* [1974], 211).

The revelations of the Father and the Son are conveyed through the third member of the Godhead, even the Holy Ghost. The Holy Ghost is the witness of and messenger for the Father and the Son.

Spiritual creation of each day

The patterns used by God in creating the earth are instructive in helping us understand how to make prayer meaningful. In the third chapter of the book of Moses we learn that all things were created spiritually before they were naturally upon the earth.

“And now, behold, I say unto you, that these are the generations of the heaven and of the earth, when they were created, in the day that I, the Lord God, made the heaven and the earth,

“And every plant of the field before it was in the earth, and every herb of the field before it grew. For I, the Lord God, created all things, of which I have spoken, spiritually, before they were naturally upon the face of the earth” (Moses 3:4–5).

We learn from these verses that the spiritual creation preceded the temporal creation. In a similar way, meaningful morning prayer is an important element in the spiritual creation of each day—and precedes the temporal creation or the actual execution of the day. Just as the temporal creation was linked to and a continuation of the spiritual creation, so meaningful morning and evening prayers are linked to and are a continuation of each other.

Consider this example. There may be things in our character, in our behavior, or concerning our spiritual growth about which we need to counsel with Heavenly Father in morning prayer. After expressing appropriate thanks for blessings received, we plead for understanding, direction, and help to do the things we cannot do in our own strength alone. For example, as we pray, we might:

- Reflect on those occasions when we have spoken harshly or inappropriately to those we love the most.

- Recognize that we know better than this, but we do not always act in accordance with what we know.

- Express remorse for our weaknesses and for not putting off the natural man more earnestly.

- Determine to pattern our life after the Savior more completely.

- Plead for greater strength to do and to become better.

Such a prayer is a key part of the spiritual preparation for our day.

During the course of the day, we keep a prayer in our heart for continued assistance and guidance—even as Alma suggested: “Let all thy thoughts be directed unto the Lord” (Alma 37:36).

We notice during this particular day that there are occasions where normally we would have a tendency to speak harshly, and we do not; or we might be inclined to anger, but we are not. We discern heavenly help and strength and humbly recognize answers to our prayer. Even in that

moment of recognition, we offer a silent prayer of gratitude.

At the end of our day, we kneel again and report back to our Father. We review the events of the day and express heartfelt thanks for the blessings and the help we received. We repent and, with the assistance of the Spirit of the Lord, identify ways we can do and become better tomorrow. Thus our evening prayer builds upon and is a continuation of our morning prayer. And our evening prayer also is a preparation for meaningful morning prayer.

Prayers linked together

Morning and evening prayers—and all of the prayers in between—are not unrelated, discrete events; rather, they are linked together each day and across days, weeks, months, and even years. This is in part how we fulfill the scriptural admonition to “pray always” (Luke 21:36; 3 Nephi 18:15, 18; D&C 31:12). Such meaningful prayers are instrumental in obtaining the highest blessings God holds in store for His faithful children.

Prayer becomes meaningful as we remember our relationship to Deity and heed the admonition to:

“Cry unto God for *all* thy support; yea, let *all* thy doings be unto the Lord, and whithersoever thou goest let it be in the Lord; yea, let *all* thy thoughts be directed unto the Lord; yea, let the affections of thy heart be placed upon the Lord forever.

“Counsel with the Lord in *all* thy doings, and he will direct thee for good; yea, when thou liest down at night lie down unto the Lord, that he may watch over you in your sleep; and when thou risest in the morning let thy heart be full of thanks unto God; and if ye do these things, ye shall be lifted up at the last day” (Alma 37:36–37; italics added).

Express heartfelt gratitude

Principle #2. Prayer becomes more meaningful as we express heartfelt gratitude.

A lesson on expressing gratitude

During our service at Brigham Young University–Idaho, Sister Bednar and I frequently hosted General Authorities in our home. Our family learned an important lesson about meaningful prayer as we knelt to pray one evening with a member of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles.

Earlier in the day Sister Bednar and I had been informed about the unexpected death of a dear friend, and our immediate desire was to pray for the surviving spouse and children. As I invited my wife to offer the prayer, the member of the Twelve, unaware of the tragedy, graciously suggested that in the prayer Sister Bednar express only appreciation for blessings received and ask for nothing. His counsel was similar to Alma’s instruction to the members of the ancient Church “to pray without ceasing, and to give thanks in all things” (Mosiah 26:39). Given the unexpected tragedy, requesting blessings for our friends initially seemed to us more urgent than expressing thanks.

Sister Bednar responded in faith to the direction she received. She thanked Heavenly Father for meaningful and memorable experiences with this dear friend. She communicated sincere gratitude for the Holy Ghost as the Comforter and for the gifts of the Spirit that enable us to face adversity and to serve others. Most importantly, she expressed appreciation for the plan of salvation, for the atoning sacrifice of Jesus Christ, for His Resurrection, and for the ordinances and covenants of the restored gospel which make it possible for families to be together forever.

Our family learned from that experience a great lesson about the power of thankfulness in meaningful prayer. Because of and through that prayer, our family was blessed with inspiration about a number of issues that were pressing upon our minds and stirring in our hearts. We learned that our gratefulness for the plan of happiness and for the Savior's mission of salvation provided needed reassurance and strengthened our confidence that all would be well with our dear friends. We also received insights concerning the things about which we should pray and appropriately ask in faith.

Rejoice in gratitude during prayer

The most meaningful and spiritual prayers I have experienced contained many expressions of thanks and few, if any, requests. As I am blessed now to pray with apostles and prophets, I find among these modern-day leaders of the Savior's Church the same characteristic that describes Captain Moroni in the Book of Mormon: these are men whose hearts swell with thanksgiving to God for the many privileges and blessings which He bestows upon His people (see Alma 48:12). Also, they do not multiply many words, for it is given unto them what they should pray, and they are filled with desire (see 3 Nephi 19:24). The prayers of prophets are childlike in their simplicity and powerful because of their sincerity.

As we strive to make our prayers more meaningful, we should remember that "in nothing doth man offend God, or against none is his wrath kindled, save those who confess not his hand in all things, and obey not his commandments" (D&C 59:21). Let me recommend that periodically you and I offer a prayer in which we only give thanks and express gratitude. Ask for nothing; simply let our souls rejoice and strive to communicate appreciation with all the energy of our hearts.

Pray for others with real intent

Principle #3. Prayer becomes more meaningful as we pray for others with real intent and a sincere heart.

Petitioning Heavenly Father for the blessings we desire in our personal lives is good and proper. However, praying earnestly for others, both those whom we love and those who spitefully use us, is also an important element of meaningful prayer. Just as expressing gratitude more often in our prayers enlarges the conduit for revelation, so praying for others with all of the energy of our souls increases our capacity to hear and to heed the voice of the Lord.

Scriptural examples of praying for others

We learn a vital lesson from the example of Lehi in the Book of Mormon. Lehi responded in faith to prophetic instruction and warnings concerning the destruction of Jerusalem. He then prayed unto the Lord "with all his heart, *in behalf of his people*" (1 Nephi 1:5; italics added). In answer to this fervent prayer, Lehi was blessed with a glorious vision of God and His Son and of the impending destruction of Jerusalem (see 1 Nephi 1:6–9, 13, 18). Consequently, Lehi rejoiced, and his whole heart was filled because of the things which the Lord had shown him (see 1 Nephi 1:15). Please note that the vision came in response to a prayer for others and not as a result of a request for personal edification or guidance.

The Savior is the perfect example of praying for others with real intent. In His great Intercessory Prayer uttered on the night before His Crucifixion, Jesus prayed for His Apostles and all of the Saints.

"I pray for them: I pray not for the world, but for them which thou hast given me; for they are thine. . . .

"Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word; . . .

“. . . That the love wherewith thou hast loved me may be in them, and I in them” (John 17:9, 20, 26).

Let others hear us pray for them

During the Savior’s ministry on the American continent, He directed the people to ponder His teachings and to pray for understanding. He healed the sick, and He prayed for the people using language that could not be written (see 3 Nephi 17:1–16). The impact of His prayer was profound: “No one can conceive of the joy which filled our souls at the time we heard him pray for us unto the Father” (3 Nephi 17:17). Imagine what it might have been like to hear the Savior of the world praying for us.

Do our spouses, children, and other family members likewise feel the power of our prayers offered unto the Father for their specific needs and desires? Do those we serve hear us pray for them with faith and sincerity? If those we love and serve have not heard and felt the influence of our earnest prayers in their behalf, then the time to repent is now. As we emulate

the example of the Savior, our prayers truly will become more meaningful.

Pray always

We are commanded to “pray always” (2 Nephi 32:9; D&C 10:5; 90:24)—“vocally as well as in [our] heart[s]; . . . before the world as well as in secret, in public as well as in private” (D&C 19:28). I testify that prayer becomes more meaningful as we counsel with the Lord in all of our doings, as we express heartfelt gratitude, and as we pray for others with real intent and a sincere heart.

I witness Heavenly Father lives and that He hears and answers every earnest prayer. Jesus is the Christ, our Savior and Mediator. Revelation is real. The fulness of the gospel has been restored to the earth in this dispensation. I so testify in the sacred name of the Lord Jesus Christ, amen.

The choir sang “We Thank Thee, O God, for a Prophet.”

Elder Don R. Clarke offered the benediction.

GENERAL PRIESTHOOD SESSION

The general priesthood session of the 178th Semiannual General Conference convened in the Conference Center at 6:00 p.m. on Saturday, October 4, 2008. President Thomas S. Monson conducted this session.

A priesthood choir from the Provo Missionary Training Center provided the music. Douglas Brenchley conducted the choir, and Clay Christiansen was the organist.

President Thomas S. Monson

Brethren, we welcome you to the general priesthood session of the 178th Semiannual General Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. These services are being relayed by satellite transmission to holders of the priesthood gathered in many locations throughout the world.

The singing during this session will be furnished by a priesthood choir from the Provo Missionary Training Center, under the direction of Douglas Brenchley, with Clay Christiansen at the organ.

We shall begin this priesthood session with the choir singing "Called to Serve." The invocation will then be offered by Elder David S. Baxter of the Seventy.

The choir sang "Called to Serve."
Elder David S. Baxter offered the invocation.

President Monson

The choir will now sing "Lord, I Would Follow Thee." Following the singing, we will hear from Elder Richard G. Scott of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. He will be followed by Elder Jay E. Jensen of the Presidency of the Seventy, after which we shall hear from Elder James J. Hamula of the Seventy.

The choir sang "Lord, I Would Follow Thee."

Elder Richard G. Scott

Inestimable value of the priesthood

My dear brethren, we are gathered across the world in the marvelous brotherhood of the holy priesthood of God. How blessed we are to be among the very few men on earth trusted to be authorized to act in the name of the Savior to bless others through the righteous use of His priesthood.

I wonder, brethren, how many of us seriously ponder the inestimable value of holding the Aaronic and Melchizedek Priesthoods. When we consider how few men who have lived on earth have received the priesthood and how Jesus Christ has empowered those individuals to act in His name, we should feel deeply humble and profoundly grateful for the priesthood we hold.

The priesthood is the authority to act in the name of God. That authority is essential to the fulfillment of His work on earth. The priesthood we hold is a delegated portion of the eternal authority of God. As we are true and faithful, our ordination to the priesthood will be eternal.

However, the conferring of authority alone does not of itself bestow the power

of the office. The extent to which we can exercise the power of the priesthood depends upon personal worthiness, faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, and obedience to His commandments. When supported by a secure foundation of gospel knowledge, our capacity to worthily use the priesthood is greatly enhanced.

The perfect role model for use of the holy priesthood is our Savior, Jesus Christ. He ministered with love, compassion, and charity. His life was a matchless example of humility and power. The greatest blessings from the use of the priesthood flow from humble service to others without thought of self. By following His example as a faithful, obedient priesthood bearer, we can access great power. When required, we can exercise the power of healing, of blessing, of consoling, and of counseling, as the quiet promptings of the Spirit are faithfully followed.

Worthiness to use the priesthood

For a few minutes I ask you to consider that you and I are alone in a quiet place where the atmosphere permits direction by the Holy Spirit. Some of you

receive periodic personal worthiness interviews, while others have callings where that seldom occurs. Will you consider that in the next few minutes you and I will have a private priesthood interview?

As we share these moments together, I ask you to ponder your personal worthiness to use the sacred authority you hold. I will also ask you to consider how consistently you use your priesthood to bless others. My intent is not to criticize but to help increase the benefits that flow from your use of the priesthood.

Are your private, personal thoughts conducive to the guidance of the Holy Spirit, or would they benefit from a thorough housecleaning? Do you nourish your mind with elevating material, or have you succumbed to the enticement of pornographic literature or Web sites? Do you scrupulously avoid the use of stimulants and substances that conflict with the intent of the Word of Wisdom, or have you made some personally rationalized exceptions? Are you most careful to control what enters your mind through your eyes and ears to ensure that it is wholesome and elevating?

If you are divorced, do you provide for the real financial need of the children you have fathered, not just the minimum legal requirement?

If you are married, are you faithful to your wife mentally as well as physically? Are you loyal to your marriage covenants by never engaging in conversation with another woman that you wouldn't want your wife to overhear? Are you kind and supportive of your own wife and children? Do you assist your wife by doing some of the household chores? Do you lead out in family activities such as scripture study, family prayer, and family home evening, or does your wife fill in the gap your lack of attention leaves in the home? Do you tell her you love her?

If any of you feel uncomfortable with any of the answers you have mentally given to the questions I have asked, take

corrective action now. If there are worthiness issues, with all of the tenderness of my heart I encourage you to speak to your bishop or a member of your stake presidency now. You need help. Those matters that trouble you will not heal themselves. Without attention they will likely get worse. It may be difficult for you to speak to your priesthood leader, but I encourage you to do it now for your own good and for the benefit of those who love you.

Using the priesthood to bless others

Brethren, I now speak of how the priesthood should be used to bless the lives of others, especially the daughters of Father in Heaven.

The family proclamation states that a husband and wife should be equal partners. I feel assured that every wife in the Church would welcome that opportunity and support it. Whether it occurs or not depends upon the husband. Many husbands practice equal partnership with their companion to the benefit of both and the blessing of their children. However, many do not. I encourage any man who is reluctant to develop an equal partnership with his wife to obey the counsel inspired by the Lord and do it. Equal partnership yields its greatest benefit when both husband and wife seek the will of the Lord in making important decisions for themselves and for their family.

Be sensitive to the promptings of the Spirit in the use of that consummate privilege of acting in the name of the Lord through your priesthood. Be more aware of how you can make greater use of the power of the priesthood in the lives of those you love and serve. I am thinking particularly of individuals such as a widow in need who likely could benefit from the help of an understanding, compassionate priesthood bearer. Many such will never request help. Be aware of the range of challenges that you could help meet in her home, such as the relief of anxieties

through an inspired priesthood blessing or the need for small repairs.

As a bishop, be sensitive and attentive to the sisters who serve in your ward council. They can identify the needs of the women in your ward who are not blessed with priesthood in the home. Through a home visit, the Relief Society can identify needs and recommend solutions to you. For matters beyond the scope of the Relief Society, you can call upon the elders quorum or the high priests group to provide assistance according to the need.

As a bishop, when you counsel with a husband and wife who are in marital difficulty, do you give the same credence to the statements of the woman that you do to the man? As I travel throughout the world, I find that some women are short-changed in that a priesthood leader is more persuaded by a son rather than a daughter of Father in Heaven. That imbalance simply must never occur.

Do single sisters receive the consideration and attention they deserve when they attend family wards? Do they have opportunities to serve in significant callings where they are made to feel welcome and wanted? Do they receive the required priesthood support?

Love, cherish, and respect women

The purpose of priesthood authority is to give, to serve, to lift, to inspire—not to exercise unrighteous control or force. In some cultures, tradition places a man in a role to dominate, control, and regulate all family affairs. That is not the way of the Lord. In some places the wife is almost owned by her husband, as if she were another of his personal possessions. That is a cruel, unproductive, mistaken vision of marriage, encouraged by Lucifer, that every priesthood holder must reject. It is founded on the false premise that a man is somehow superior to a woman. Nothing could be further from the truth. The scriptures confirm that Father in Heaven saved

His greatest, most splendid, supreme creation, woman, to the end. Only after all else was completed was woman created. Only then was the work pronounced complete and good.

Of our wives, mothers, grandmothers, and sisters and other important women in our lives, President Hinckley declared:

“Of all the creations of the Almighty, there is none more beautiful, none more inspiring than a lovely daughter of God who walks in virtue with an understanding of why she should do so, who honors and respects her body as a thing sacred and divine, who cultivates her mind and constantly enlarges the horizon of her understanding, who nurtures her spirit with everlasting truth.”¹

By divine design a woman is fundamentally different from a man in many ways.² She is compassionate and seeks the interests of others around her. However, that compassionate nature can become overwhelming for women who identify far more to accomplish than they can possibly do, even with the help of the Lord. Some become discouraged because they do not feel they are doing all they should do. I believe this is a feeling that many worthy, effective, devoted women of the Church experience.

Therefore, as a husband or son, express gratitude for what your wife and mother do for you. Express your love and gratitude often. That will make life far richer, more pleasant and purposeful for many of the daughters of Father in Heaven who seldom hear a complimentary comment and are not thanked for the multitude of things they do. As a husband, when you sense that your wife needs lifting, hold her in your arms and tell her how much you love her. May each of us ever be tender and appreciative of the special women who enrich our lives.

Often the real value of something is not recognized until it is taken from us. To illustrate, consider a man who had lost

the use of the priesthood through transgression. Later it was returned to him as part of the restoration of ordinances he obtained through full repentance. After the restoration, I turned to his wife and said, “Would you like a blessing?” She enthusiastically responded. Then I looked at the husband, now capable of using his priesthood, and said, “Would you like to give your wife a blessing?” Words cannot express the profound emotion of such an experience and the bonds of love, trust, and gratitude it created. You shouldn’t have to lose your priesthood to appreciate it more fully.

I know the immense joy and happiness that come from loving, cherishing, and respecting my precious wife with all my heart and soul. May your use of the priesthood and treatment of the important women in your life bring you the same satisfaction.

Be more productive with the priesthood

As one of the 15 Apostles of the Lord Jesus Christ on earth, I express my own feelings regarding the priesthood as it has

been captured perfectly by this statement of President Howard W. Hunter:

“As special witnesses of our Savior, we have been given the awesome assignment to administer the affairs of his church and kingdom and to minister to his daughters and his sons wherever they are on the face of the earth. By reason of our call to testify, govern, and minister, it is required of us that despite age, infirmity, exhaustion, and feelings of inadequacy, we do the work he has given us to do, to the last breath of our lives.”³

God will hold us accountable for how we treat His precious daughters. Therefore, let us treat them as He would wish to have them treated. I pray that the Lord will guide us to be more inspired, sensitive, and productive with the priesthood we hold, especially with His daughters. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

1. Gordon B. Hinckley, “Our Responsibility to Our Young Women,” *Ensign*, Sept. 1988, 11.
2. See Moses 4:17–19; 5:10–11.
3. Howard W. Hunter, “To the Women of the Church,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1992, 96.

Elder Jay E. Jensen

Arms of safety

I speak this evening about the Atonement of Jesus Christ and its relevance to the administration of the sacrament by the holders of the Aaronic Priesthood, taught so powerfully and so beautifully by Elder Oaks this morning. I will use a short scripture phrase that helps me visualize the Savior’s mercy. It is the phrase “arms of safety” (see Alma 34:16).

Secure in His arms

A family had been taking pictures on a lookout point of the North Rim of the

Grand Canyon. They heard screams and ran to find that a two-year-old girl had fallen through a railing to a ledge about 35 feet below. The little one tried to climb back up, but her movements caused her to slip even farther until she was 5 feet from a dangerous 200-foot drop.

A 19-year-old young man named Ian saw where she was and, using his emergency-response training, knew how to handle the situation. These are his words:

“Immediately, it all came at me, and I just knew what I had to do. I set down my camera and went up the trail a little ways where it wasn’t as steep, climbed over

the rail, scrambled down a bunch of rocks and through brush, and found her.’ Holding her in his arms for an hour, Ian waited until emergency teams could drop down with ropes [to rescue them]” (in Patricia Auxier, “Save Her!” *New Era*, Sept. 2007, 7).

The phrase “holding her in his arms” caught my attention because the scriptures talk about arms—arms of love, arms of mercy, and arms of safety (see 2 Nephi 1:15; Mosiah 16:12; Alma 5:33; D&C 6:20; 29:1).

The scripture phrase “encircled in the arms of safety” comes from Amulek’s message to the Zoramites about the infinite and eternal Atonement. He taught that the sacrifice of the Son of God made it possible for man to have faith in Christ to lead us to repent. “And thus mercy can satisfy the demands of justice, and encircles them in the arms of safety” (Alma 34:16; see also verses 9–15).

Teach intangibles with tangibles

To better understand “arms of safety” it is important to remember that the Savior used tangible things, such as coins, seeds, sheep, loaves, fishes, and body parts to teach gospel principles.

Arms are tangible, and we use them to express affection and love. When I come home from the office, I am encircled in the tangible arms of my wife. I have experienced arms of love and safety throughout my service in Latin America by means of the common greeting, *un abrazo*, or hug.

As I have pondered how to effectively teach the Atonement to others, the phrase “arms of safety” has been useful. When we were baptized and received the Holy Ghost by the laying on of hands, we received two ordinances that introduce us to the arms of safety. By coming humbly and fully repentant to sacrament meeting and worthily partaking of the sacrament, we may feel those arms again and again.

Likening a sacrament meeting to our day

The section heading to Doctrine and Covenants 110 gives the context for one of our most relevant verses about enjoying arms of safety. On a Sabbath day during the dedication of the Kirtland Temple, the Prophet Joseph Smith explained that he and other priesthood holders had administered the sacrament to the Church.

Following this sacred ordinance, Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery retired to pray in private. Following the prayer, the Savior appeared to these two men and said, “Behold, your sins are forgiven you; you are clean before me; therefore, lift up your heads and rejoice” (D&C 110:5).

The sequence of events in the Kirtland Temple in 1836 parallels our day and is likened to us. Sabbath after Sabbath, you young priesthood holders administer the sacrament to the Saints, who come to sacrament meeting prayerfully, hungering for spiritual healing, hoping, pleading to hear in their minds and hearts these words:

“Behold, your sins are forgiven you; you are clean before me; therefore, lift up your heads and rejoice” (D&C 110:5).

Elder Dallin H. Oaks has testified that there is a spiritual cleansing or healing associated with the sacrament:

“The sacrament of the Lord’s Supper is a renewal of the covenants and blessings of baptism. We are commanded to repent of our sins and to come to the Lord with a broken heart and a contrite spirit and partake of the sacrament. In partaking of the bread, we witness that we are willing to take upon us the name of Jesus Christ and always remember Him and keep His commandments. When we comply with this covenant, the Lord renews the cleansing effect of our baptism. We are made clean and can always have His Spirit to be with us” (“Special Witnesses of Christ,” *Ensign*, Apr. 2001, 13).

Implications for Aaronic Priesthood holders

To help members more fully receive that cleansing, or the arms of safety, those who hold keys to authorize and those who administer the sacrament should ensure that general guidelines in Church handbooks concerning the preparation, blessing, and passing of the sacrament are followed. Each priesthood holder should remember that he is acting on behalf of the Lord and be reverent and dignified. Generally speaking, our youth are exemplary. However, in the administration of the sacrament, occasionally we see a disturbing drift toward too much informality and casualness in dress and appearance.

Young men, before going to church, will you please pause before a mirror one more time and ask yourself if every aspect of your appearance is in order? Better still, invite someone you love, such as a parent, to look at you one more time, and if something is amiss, don't resent their counsel.

True servants of Jesus Christ are properly groomed and dressed, reflecting always His standards and not the worldly drift of casualness. Having every detail carefully attended to ensures that the Spirit of the Lord will be present. The dress or appearance of those administering the sacrament should not be a distraction for those who are earnestly seeking the blessings of the infinite Atonement.

A theme found in the messages of President Monson to us, the priesthood holders, is that it is a privilege to hold the priesthood: "It is a commission to serve, a privilege to lift, and an opportunity to bless the lives of others" (in Conference Report, Apr. 2006, 60; or *Ensign*, May 2006, 57). I testify that this applies to the administration of the sacrament.

Experiencing the arms of safety

While serving as a bishop, I witnessed the blessings of the Atonement in the lives

of Church members who committed serious transgressions. As a judge in Israel, I listened to their confessions and, when needed, placed restrictions upon them, such as not partaking of the sacrament for a time.

A young single adult in our ward was dating a young woman. They allowed their affections to get out of control. He came to me for counsel and help. Based on what was confessed and the impressions of the Spirit to me, among other things, he was not permitted to partake of the sacrament for a time. We met regularly to ensure that repentance had happened, and after an appropriate time I authorized him to again partake of the sacrament.

As I sat on the stand in that sacrament meeting, my eyes were drawn to him as he now partook of the sacrament worthily. I witnessed arms of mercy, love, and safety encircling him as the healing of the Atonement warmed his soul and lifted his load, resulting in the promised forgiveness, peace, and happiness.

The Atonement—an ever-present power

I have experienced and have a witness of a truth that President Packer taught:

"For some reason we think the Atonement of Christ applies *only* at the end of mortal life to redemption from the Fall, from spiritual death. It is much more than that. It is an ever-present power to call upon in everyday life. When we are racked or harrowed up or tormented by guilt or burdened with grief, He can heal us. While we do not fully understand how the Atonement of Christ was made, we can experience 'the peace of God, which passeth all understanding'" (in Conference Report, Apr. 2001, 28; or *Ensign*, May 2001, 23).

I love my Heavenly Father and His Son, Jesus Christ. I place my faith, my love, my loyalty, and my devotion in Them. I testify that God is our Heavenly Father and that we are His children. I bear witness that the Atonement is real and has

power in our lives. I testify that the restored gospel is true. These truths are found in the holy scriptures, especially

in the Book of Mormon. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

Elder James J. Hamula

Fighting the war against evil

I speak tonight to my brethren of the Aaronic Priesthood. It is my desire to help you more deeply appreciate who you are, what your purpose in life is, and how you may succeed in accomplishing that purpose.

You have come into the world at a most significant time. We are entering the final stages of a great war. This war commenced before the foundations of the world and has been pursued with awful consequence throughout the world's history. I speak of the war between the followers of Christ and all those who deny Him as their God.¹

John the Revelator wrote concerning this war:

“And there was war in heaven: Michael and his angels fought against the dragon; and the dragon fought and his angels,

“And prevailed not; neither was their place found any more in heaven.

“And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world: he was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him.”²

It was Satan who instigated this pre-mortal war. He did so by rebelling against our Father's plan of salvation for His children and rejecting the Christ, who was designated to effectuate the plan. Tragically, a third of our Father's children followed Satan.³ Yet two-thirds did not. You, my young friends, were among these, and with them have come to earth to pursue the Father's plan of happiness.

Unfortunately, Satan's war did not end with his expulsion from heaven. As

John observed, Satan and his followers were “cast out into the earth”⁴ and have come here with “great wrath.”⁵ The evidence of their wrath can be seen in the blood and horror that has afflicted man from the beginning of time.

So profound and extensive have been the wounds suffered among men that God Himself wept as He surveyed man's condition.⁶

We now find ourselves in the last days of this earth's temporal history. In a coming day, our Father's Son will return to the earth from which He was rejected and reclaim it as His own.⁷ In that day, He will subdue Satan and his legions and usher in a thousand years of peace and righteousness.⁸ In anticipation of that day, God has restored His kingdom to the earth one last time. That kingdom is The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.⁹

While God's kingdom has been established on the earth in times past, the people to whom the kingdom was previously committed were unable to keep it. This time, however, is different. The prophetic promise is that this time God's kingdom will not be lost but will overcome the world.¹⁰

You are the Lord's warriors

To ensure its ultimate success, the final restoration of God's kingdom has been commenced with unprecedented spiritual power¹¹ and is being sustained by that same spiritual power and something more. Reserved to come forth in these last days and labor for our Father and His Son are some of the most valiant and noble of our Father's sons and daughters. Their valiance and nobility were demonstrated in

the pre-earth struggle with Satan. There, “being left to choose good or evil,” they “[chose] good” and exhibited “exceedingly great faith” and “good works.”¹² Such are the traits that are now needed to sustain the work of God in the earth and to save the souls of men from the intensifying wrath of the adversary.

Now, my young friends of the Aaronic Priesthood, you are these valiant and noble sons of our Father! You are the strength of the Lord’s house, His warriors!¹³ You are those who chose good over evil and who exhibited “exceedingly great faith” and “good works.” And because of your personal history, you were entrusted to come to the earth in these last days to do again what you did before—to once again choose good over evil, exercise exceedingly great faith, and perform good works—and to do so in behalf of the kingdom of God on the earth and your fellowman!

The focus of Satan’s war is on you

With God’s kingdom restored to the earth and your entry into the world, Satan knows that “he hath but a short time.”¹⁴ Therefore, Satan is marshalling every resource at his disposal to entice you into transgression. He knows that if he can draw you into transgression, he may prevent you from serving a full-time mission, marrying in the temple, and securing your future children in the faith, all of which weakens not only you but the Church. He knows that nothing can overthrow God’s kingdom “save it [be] the transgression of [his] people.”¹⁵ Make no mistake about it—the focus of his war is now on you—you who seek to “keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ.”¹⁶

Now, my young friends, you need to appreciate that our days now and the days that lie ahead are “perilous.”¹⁷ In this regard, President Boyd K. Packer has observed:

“I know of nothing in the history of the Church or in the history of the world

to compare with our present circumstances. Nothing happened in Sodom and Gomorrah which exceeds in wickedness and depravity that which surrounds us now.”¹⁸

Be sober, valiant warriors

In referring to the perils of our day, I do not intend to inspire fear, but soberness. Being sober means being earnest and serious in assessing your circumstances and careful and circumspect in weighing the consequences of your actions. Soberness therefore yields good judgment, as well as measured conduct. No wonder, then, that prophets counsel young men to be sober.¹⁹ Remember Mormon’s observation that what made Helaman’s 2,000 stripling warriors so effective in battle was not just their courage, strength, and trustworthiness, but their “soberness.”²⁰ Mormon valued such a trait because he was blessed to possess it himself. It was Mormon who was entrusted with the sacred records of the Nephite nation at only 10 years of age because he was a “sober child” and “quick to observe.”²¹ And it was Mormon who, at age 15, was “visited of the Lord” and “knew of the goodness of Jesus” because he was of a “sober mind.”²²

So, as we enter the final climactic stages of the war against Satan, be sober, my young friends. Understand that you cannot partake of drugs, alcohol, or tobacco. You cannot participate in pornography or other immoral activity. You cannot lie, cheat, or steal. You cannot use false, demeaning, or dirty language. You cannot deface your body with tattoos and other piercings. You cannot do these things and be victorious in the battle for your own soul, let alone be a valiant warrior in the great struggle for the souls of all the rest of our Father’s children.²³

How to win the war against evil

Understand, my young friends, that there is only one way to win the war

against Satan, and that is to win it in the same way it was won in the beginning. When victory was finally achieved in the War in Heaven, a loud voice was heard to declare:

“Now is come salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of his Christ. . . .

“For they [referring to Michael and his angels] have overcome him [referring to the devil] by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony; for they loved not their own lives, but kept the testimony even unto death.”²⁴

Do not miss the significance of this declaration. Satan was overcome in the beginning by (1) *faith* in the Lord Jesus Christ and His atoning sacrifice, (2) *testimony* of Him that was steadfastly kept to the very end, and (3) *consecration* of oneself to the Lord and His work. If this was the means for defeating him in the beginning, you can be sure that this is the one sure way to defeat him now.²⁵

Now, you may wonder how to acquire the faith, testimony, and consecration of spirit necessary to overcome the adversary. Let me assure you that these qualities are already within you. You simply need to recover them. To that end, allow me to make three suggestions.

First, do as young Joseph Smith did. Find a quiet place and pray to your Father in Heaven.²⁶ Do so regularly and earnestly. Prayer is a precondition to revelation. The more regular and earnest the prayer, the more frequent the revelation. When received, revelation provides the evidence or assurance of things unseen, which is the foundation of faith.²⁷

Second, learn to hear the voice of the Lord. His is a still, small, and whisper-like voice.²⁸ It is one that is felt more than it is heard. It comes in the form of thoughts, feelings, and impressions. To hear such a voice, you must be still and quiet in your own soul, laying aside your excess laughter and light-mindedness.²⁹ While it may not seem easy to so discipline your life,

hearing the precious, loving voice of the Lord will sustain you in every circumstance and is therefore worth every effort.

Third, obey the word of the Lord as it is given to you. His word will not only love and comfort but invariably instruct and correct. Do as He bids you to do, no matter how hard it may seem to you, and do it now. It is in doing the will of the Lord that knowledge of Him and love for Him accrue to your soul, which leads you to be ever more willing to lay down your own life and follow Him.³⁰

My dear brethren of the Aaronic Priesthood, these are your days! Do not squander them! Be sober! Take “the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall . . . quench all the fiery darts of the wicked.”³¹ Then “fight the good fight of faith.”³² And when you have done all, “stand”³³ still and “see the salvation of the Lord.”³⁴ I assure you that His salvation will come, delivering you and yours from every evil. I so testify in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

1. See 1 Nephi 14:10, 13 (“There are save two churches only; the one is the church of the Lamb of God, and the other is the church of the devil . . . [which] gather[s] together multitudes upon the face of all the earth . . . to fight against the Lamb of God”).
2. Revelation 12:7–9.
3. See Doctrine and Covenants 29:36.
4. Revelation 12:9.
5. Revelation 12:12.
6. See Moses 7:29, 36–37.
7. See Matthew 21:33–44.
8. See Doctrine and Covenants 88:110; Moses 7:64.
9. See Bruce R. McConkie, in Conference Report, Oct. 1984, 104; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1984, 84.
10. See Daniel 2:44–45; Doctrine and Covenants 38:9–15; 82:24.
11. See Joseph Smith—History 1:17–19 (the appearance of the Father and the Son to Joseph Smith was the first such appearance to man since the Garden of

- Eden); 1:30–49 (Moroni); Doctrine and Covenants 27:7–8, 12–13 (John the Baptist, Peter, James, and John); 110:11–16 (Moses, Elias, and Elijah); 128:19–21 (“divers angels, from Michael or Adam down to the present”).
12. Alma 13:3.
 13. See Doctrine and Covenants 101:55; 105:16.
 14. Revelation 12:12.
 15. Mosiah 27:13.
 16. Revelation 12:17.
 17. 2 Timothy 3:1.
 18. Boyd K. Packer, “The One Pure Defense” (address to CES religious educators, Feb. 6, 2004), 4.
 19. Alma counseled each of his sons—Helaman, Shiblon, and Corianton—to “be sober” (see Alma 37:47; 38:15; 42:31). Paul also exhorted young men to be “sober minded” (Titus 2:6). In addition, Paul counseled others to be sober, particularly bishops (see Romans 12:3; 1 Thessalonians 5:6, 8; 1 Timothy 3:2, 11; Titus 1:8; 2:2, 4, 12).
 20. See Alma 53:20–21.
 21. Mormon 1:2.
 22. Mormon 1:15.
 23. See Gordon B. Hinckley, “An Unending Conflict, a Victory Assured,” *Ensign*, June 2007, 4–9.
 24. Joseph Smith Translation, Revelation 12:9, 11.
 25. See Doctrine and Covenants 76:53 (those who inherit the celestial kingdom “overcome by faith”); 1 John 5:4–5 (“this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith,” and “he that overcometh the world” is “he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God”).
 26. See Joseph Smith—History 1:11–15.
 27. See Hebrews 11:1; Alma 32:21; Ether 12:6.
 28. The voice of the Spirit is described as a still, small voice of perfect mildness, as if it were a whisper. See 1 Kings 19:12; Helaman 5:30; Doctrine and Covenants 85:6.
 29. See Doctrine and Covenants 88:69, 121.
 30. See Matthew 16:24–25; John 7:17.
 31. Ephesians 6:16.
 32. 1 Timothy 6:12.
 33. See Malachi 3:2. “Who shall be able to stand?” (Revelation 6:17). Those who have taken the “whole armour of God” and have “done all” (Ephesians 6:13).
 34. Exodus 14:13.

President Monson

Thank you, brethren.

The choir and congregation will now stand and sing “Praise to the Man.” President Dieter F. Uchtdorf, Second Counselor in the First Presidency, will then address us, after which we shall hear from President Henry B. Eyring, First Counselor in the First Presidency.

The choir and congregation sang
“Praise to the Man.”

President Dieter F. Uchtdorf

Lift where you stand

Beloved brethren, I am honored to be with you at this worldwide priesthood gathering. With you, I am so grateful to be in the presence of our beloved prophet, President Thomas S. Monson, and President Eyring. Brethren, we thank you for your faithfulness and moral strength. It is indeed a privilege and a joy to be part of this great brotherhood.

Some years ago in our meetinghouse in Darmstadt, Germany, a group of brethren was asked to move a grand piano from the chapel to the adjoining cultural hall, where it was needed for a musical event. None were professional movers, and the task of getting that gravity-friendly instrument through the chapel and into the cultural hall seemed nearly impossible. Everybody knew that this task required

not only physical strength but also careful coordination. There were plenty of ideas, but not one could keep the piano balanced correctly. They repositioned the brethren by strength, height, and age over and over again—nothing worked.

As they stood around the piano, uncertain of what to do next, a good friend of mine, Brother Hanno Luschin, spoke up. He said, “Brethren, stand close together and lift where you stand.”

It seemed too simple. Nevertheless, each lifted where he stood, and the piano rose from the ground and moved into the cultural hall as if on its own power. That was the answer to the challenge. They merely needed to stand close together and lift where they stood.

I have often thought of Brother Luschin’s simple idea and have been impressed by its profound truth. Tonight I would like to expand on that simple concept, “lift where you stand.”

Some want to lead; others want to hide

Although it may seem simple, lifting where we stand is a principle of power. Most of the priesthood bearers I know understand and live by this principle. They are eager to roll up their sleeves and go to work, whatever that work might be. They faithfully perform their priesthood duties. They magnify their callings. They serve the Lord by serving others. They stand close together and lift where they stand.

However, there are those who sometimes struggle with this concept. And when they do, they seem to fall into one of two camps: either they seek to lead, or they seek to hide. They covet a crown or a cave.

Those who seek to lead

Those who seek to lead may feel they are capable of doing more than what they are currently asked to do. Some might think, “If only I were a bishop, I could

make a difference.” They believe that their abilities far surpass their calling. Perhaps if they were in an important position of leadership, they would work hard at making a difference. But they wonder, “What possible influence can I have as merely a home teacher or a counselor in the quorum presidency?”

Those who seek to hide

Those who seek to hide may feel that they are too busy to serve in the Church. When the chapel needs to be cleaned, when the Mendez family needs help moving, when the bishop calls them to teach a class, they always seem to have a ready excuse.

Twenty years ago, President Ezra Taft Benson shared reports from bishops and stake presidents that some members “are turning down calls to serve claiming they are ‘too busy’ or they ‘haven’t got time.’ Others . . . accept such callings, but refuse to magnify those callings.”

President Benson went on to say that “the Lord expects each of us to have a calling in His Church so that others may be blessed by our talents and influence.”¹

Oddly enough, often the root cause of both of these tendencies—seeking to lead or seeking to hide—may be the same: selfishness.

A better way

There is a better way, taught to us by the Savior Himself: “Whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant.”²

When we seek to serve others, we are motivated not by selfishness but by charity. This is the way Jesus Christ lived His life and the way a holder of the priesthood must live his. The Savior did not care for the honors of men; Satan offered Him all the kingdoms and glory of the world, and Jesus rejected the offer immediately and completely.³ Throughout His life, the Savior must have often felt

tired and pressed upon, with scarcely a moment to Himself; yet He always made time for the sick, the sorrowful, and the overlooked.

In spite of this shining example, we too easily and too often get caught up in seeking the honors of men rather than serving the Lord with all our might, mind, and strength.

Brethren, when we stand before the Lord to be judged, will He look upon the positions we have held in the world or even in the Church? Do you suppose that titles we have had other than “husband,” “father,” or “priesthood holder” will mean much to Him? Do you think He will care how packed our schedule was or how many important meetings we attended? Do you suppose that our success in filling our days with appointments will serve as an excuse for failure to spend time with our wife and family?

The Lord judges so very differently from the way we do. He is pleased with the noble servant, not with the self-serving noble.

Those who are humble in this life will wear crowns of glory in the next. Jesus taught this doctrine Himself when He told the story of the rich man who was clothed in purple and fine linen and ate sumptuously every day, while the beggar Lazarus yearned merely to taste of the crumbs from the rich man’s table. In the next life, Lazarus appeared in glory next to Abraham, while the rich man was cast into hell, where he lifted up his eyes in torment.⁴

Example of John Rowe Moyle

This year marks the 200th anniversary of the birth of John Rowe Moyle. John was a convert to the Church who left his home in England and traveled to the Salt Lake Valley as part of a handcart company. He built a home for his family in a small town a valley away from Salt Lake City. John was an accomplished

stonecutter and, because of this skill, was asked to work on the Salt Lake Temple.

Every Monday John left home at two o’clock in the morning and walked six hours in order to be at his post on time. On Friday he would leave his work at five o’clock in the evening and walk almost until midnight before arriving home. He did this year after year.

One day while he was doing his chores at home, a cow kicked him in the leg, causing a compound fracture. With limited medical resources, the only option was to amputate the broken leg. So John’s family and friends strapped him onto a door and, with a bucksaw, cut off his leg a few inches from the knee.

In spite of the crude surgery, the leg started to heal. Once John could sit up in bed, he began carving a wooden leg with an ingenious joint that served as an ankle to an artificial foot. Walking on this device was extremely painful, but John did not give up, building up his endurance until he could make the 22-mile journey to the Salt Lake Temple each week, where he continued his work.

His hands carved the words “Holiness to the Lord” that stand today as a golden marker to all who visit the Salt Lake Temple.⁵

John did not do this for the praise of man. Neither did he shirk his duty, even though he had every reason to do so. He knew what the Lord expected him to do.

Years later, John’s grandson Henry D. Moyle was called as a member of the Quorum of the Twelve. Eventually he served in the First Presidency of the Church. President Moyle’s service in these callings was honorable, but his grandfather John’s service, though somewhat less public, is just as pleasing to the Lord. John’s character, his legacy of sacrifice, serves as a banner of faithfulness and an ensign of duty to his family and to the Church. John Rowe Moyle understood the meaning of “lift where you stand.”

Example of Helaman's 2,000 warriors

Individual recognition is rarely an indication of the value of our service. We do not know the names, for example, of any of the 2,000 sons of Helaman. As individuals, they are unnamed. As a group, however, their name will always be remembered for honesty, courage, and the willingness to serve. They accomplished together what none of them could have accomplished alone.

That is a lesson for us, brethren of the priesthood. When we stand close together and lift where we stand, when we care more for the glory of the kingdom of God than for our own prestige or pleasure, we can accomplish so much more.

Every calling is an opportunity to grow

No calling is beneath us. Every calling provides an opportunity to serve and to grow. The Lord organized the Church in a way that offers each member an opportunity for service, which, in turn, leads to personal spiritual growth. Whatever your calling, I urge you to see it as an opportunity not only to strengthen and bless others but also to become what Heavenly Father wants you to become.

When traveling to the stakes of Zion for the purpose of reorganizing a stake presidency, I have sometimes been surprised when, during an interview, a brother would tell me that he had received an impression that he would be in the next presidency.

When I first heard this, I wasn't sure how to react. It took some time before the Holy Spirit gave me understanding. I believe that the Lord has a certain calling for every man. Sometimes He grants spiritual promptings telling us that we are *worthy* to receive certain callings. This is a spiritual blessing, a tender mercy from God.

But sometimes we do not hear the rest of what the Lord is telling us. "Although you are worthy to serve in this position,"

He may say, "this is not my calling for you. It is my desire instead that you lift where you stand." God knows what is best for us.

An assignment only you can perform

Every priesthood holder stands at a unique place and has an important task that only he can perform.

We all have heard stories of how President Monson visits and blesses the elderly and the sick, always attending to their needs and bringing them cheer, comfort, and love. President Monson has a natural way about him that makes people feel better about themselves. Wouldn't it be wonderful if President Monson could visit and watch over every family in the Church?

It would. But, of course, he can't—and he shouldn't. The Lord has not asked him to do that. The Lord has asked us, as home teachers, to love and watch over our assigned families. The Lord has not asked President Monson to organize and conduct our family home evening. He wants us, as fathers, to do this.

You may feel that there are others who are more capable or more experienced who could fulfill your callings and assignments better than you can, but the Lord gave you your responsibilities for a reason. There may be people and hearts only you can reach and touch. Perhaps no one else could do it in quite the same way.

Our Heavenly Father asks that we represent Him in the noble work of reaching out and blessing the lives of His children. He asks us to stand firm with the power of the priesthood in our hearts and souls and give the calling we have at this moment our best efforts.

Brethren, as strong as you are, you cannot and you should not lift a piano by yourself. Likewise, none of us can or should move the Lord's work alone. But if we all stand close together in the place the Lord has appointed and lift where we stand, nothing can keep this divine work from moving upward and forward.

Brethren, may we cease to aspire and cease to retire!

May we always remember this profound lesson: that we are banner bearers of the Lord Jesus Christ, upheld by the Holy Spirit of God, faithful and true to the end, each one devoted to give our all to the cause of Zion and bound by covenant to stand close together and lift where we stand.

For this I pray, and I leave you my blessing and my love in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

1. *The Teachings of Ezra Taft Benson* (1988), 451–52; see also “Provo Tabernacle Rededicated,” *Ensign*, Dec. 1986, 70.
2. Matthew 20:27.
3. See Matthew 4:8–10.
4. See Luke 16:19–31.
5. In Gene A. Sessions, ed., “Biographies and Reminiscences from the James Henry Moyle Collection,” typescript, Church Archives, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 203.

President Henry B. Eyring

To those who feel overwhelmed

My dear brethren, tonight I wish to encourage priesthood holders who at times feel overwhelmed with their responsibilities. That is a challenge I have spoken of before. I return to it because it returns so often in the lives of those I love and serve.

Most of you have discovered that your priesthood duties will stretch you to the point that you wonder if you can stretch that far. It may have happened when you were asked to speak in a stake conference before hundreds of people. For the recent convert, it may have been being asked to pray in public or teach a class for the first time. For some, it may have been trying to learn a language in a missionary training center. If that didn’t take you to your limit, it surely did on the streets of a strange city when your mission president charged you to speak to every person you met to testify of the Savior and of the restoration of the gospel.

You may have thought then, “Once I finish my mission, being a faithful priesthood holder will get easier.” But in a few years you found yourself getting even less sleep at night, while trying to support a wife and a new baby, being kind and loving, scrambling to get some education,

reaching out to the members of your elders quorum, perhaps even helping them to move their furniture, and trying to find time to serve your ancestors in the temple. You may have kept a smile on your face with the thought: “When I get a little older, being a faithful priesthood holder will not require so much. It will get easier.”

Those of you further down the road are smiling because you know something about priesthood service. It is this: the more faithful service you give, the more the Lord asks of you. Your smile is a happy one because you know that He increases our power to carry the heavier load.

Go to your outer limits to gain strength

The tough part of that reality, however, is that for Him to give you that increased power you must go in service and faith to your outer limits.

It is like building muscle strength. You must break down your muscles to build them up. You push muscles to the point of exhaustion. Then they repair themselves, and they develop greater strength. Increased spiritual strength is a gift from God which He can give when we push in His service to our limits. Through the power of the Atonement of Jesus Christ,

our natures can be changed. Then our power to carry burdens can be increased more than enough to compensate for the increased service we will be asked to give.

That helps me understand when I see someone else who makes priesthood service look easy. I know that they have either passed hard tests or that the tests lie ahead. So rather than envying them, I stand ready to help when the going gets harder for them, because it surely will.

That testing of our limits in priesthood service is made necessary by God's plan to qualify His children to live with Him again forever. Heavenly Father loves His children. He offered us eternal life, to live with Him again in families and in glory forever. To qualify us to receive that gift, He gave us a mortal body, the opportunity to be tempted to sin, and a way to be cleansed from that sin and to rise in the First Resurrection. He gave us His Beloved Son, Jehovah, as our Savior to make that possible. The Savior was born in mortal life, was tempted but never sinned, and then in Gethsemane and on Golgotha paid the price of our sins so that we could be cleansed. The purifying can come only to those who have faith enough in Jesus Christ to repent of sin, be cleansed through the ordinance of baptism, and make and keep covenants to obey all His commandments. And there was to be a fierce enemy of our souls, Lucifer, who would with his legions relentlessly try to capture every child of God to keep him or her from having the joy of eternal life.

You can't do it by yourself

In His kindness and in great trust, Heavenly Father, with the Savior, allowed a selected few of His sons on earth to hold the priesthood. We have the authority and the power to act in God's name, to offer the true gospel of Jesus Christ and its ordinances to as many of Heavenly Father's children as we can. So you can sense the magnitude of our trust from God. And you

can sense its supreme importance and the opposition we face.

It is not surprising that we feel from time to time nearly overwhelmed. Your thought that "I'm not sure I can do this" is evidence that you are understanding what it means to hold the priesthood of God. The fact is that you can't do it by yourself. The responsibility is too difficult and too important for your mortal powers and for mine. Recognizing that is at the foundation of great priesthood service.

Angels to bear you up

When those feelings of inadequacy strike us, that is the time to remember the Savior. He assures us that we don't do this work alone. There are scriptures to put on your mirror and to remember in the moments when you are doubting your capacity.

For instance, President Thomas S. Monson remembered the promised words of the Savior as he blessed me six months ago to stand fearlessly in my calling when it seemed hard. These words of the Savior, which He gave to His tiny band of priesthood holders in this dispensation, came to the prophet's mind as he laid his hands on my head:

"And whoso receiveth you, there I will be also, for I will go before your face. I will be on your right hand and on your left, and my Spirit shall be in your hearts, and mine angels round about you, to bear you up."¹

The promise which President Monson remembered and quoted was fulfilled for me. Confidence replaced doubt, the Spirit came, medical helpers were inspired, my life was preserved, and I was borne up. Because of that blessing by President Monson, it will always be easy for me to remember the Savior and trust His promise that He goes before and beside us in His service.

I know that the promise of angels to bear us up is real. You might want to bring

to memory the assurance of Elisha to his frightened servant. That assurance is ours when we feel close to being overwhelmed in our service. Elisha faced real and terrible opposition:

“And when the servant of the man of God was risen early, and gone forth, behold, an host compassed the city both with horses and chariots. And his servant said unto him, Alas, my master! how shall we do?

“And he answered, Fear not: for they that be with us are more than they that be with them.

“And Elisha prayed, and said, Lord, I pray thee, open his eyes, that he may see. And the Lord opened the eyes of the young man; and he saw: and, behold, the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire round about Elisha.”²

Support through callings, assignments

Like that servant of Elisha, there are more with you than those you can see opposed to you. Some who are with you will be invisible to your mortal eyes. The Lord will bear you up and will at times do it by calling others to stand with you. That is why we have quorums. That is why quorum leaders look at faces and into eyes in quorum meetings. That is why the bishop is more than presiding in the priests quorum. He is watching the faces of the priests. You will have such a bishop or such an elders quorum president or such a mission president. And he will come to help you and call others to stand with you. It may be to call the right companion to serve with you in your time of need.

That suggests at least two things. One is to recognize and welcome those whom the Lord sends to help us. The other is to see in every assignment the opportunity to strengthen another. A mission president once told me of a missionary he assigned to more than 12 or 13 companions. He said to me, “Every one of those companions

was about to go home early or be sent home. But we didn’t lose one of them.”

When I mentioned that miraculous fact later to the companion who saved so many at the point of their being overwhelmed, I got a response which surprised and taught me. It was this: “I don’t think that story is true. I never had a companion who was failing.”

I could see that a mission president had been inspired to send the right angel time after time. We can expect in our service to have help sent to us at the right time who will see strength in us and lift us up. And we can look forward to being the one sent by the Lord to encourage another.

How to help those who feel overwhelmed

I can tell you from experience something about how to help if you are the one sent. Shortly after I was called to the Quorum of the Twelve, I got a phone call from President Faust, counselor in the First Presidency. He asked me to come to his office. I went with some concern as to why he would take the time to visit with me.

After some pleasantries, he looked at me and said, “Has it happened yet?” When I looked puzzled, he went on to say, “I’ve been watching you in meetings. It seems to me that you have been feeling that your calling is beyond you and that you are not qualified.”

I said that doubt had come to me, as if I had hit a wall. I expected that he was going to reassure me. I told him that I appreciated his being aware of my doubts and asked for his help. But I was surprised by his kind, firm reply. He said, “Don’t ask me. Go to Him.” Then he pointed up to heaven. Now years later I sit in that same office. When I walk into it I look up and remember him and how he taught me by example how to help those who are feeling overwhelmed in the Lord’s service. Find a way to send them with confidence to Him. If they will follow your counsel,

they will gain the strength they need and to spare.

All your heart, might, mind, and strength

Time and again over your life, the Lord has been giving you the experiences to build strength, courage, and determination. He knew how much you would need that to serve Him. Some of it may have come, as it did for me, when you stood with other priesthood holders and said aloud the words: "Therefore, O ye that embark in the service of God, see that ye serve him with all your heart, might, mind and strength, that ye may stand blameless before God at the last day."³

When you committed to that high standard and met it, the Lord was building a trust and strength in you that would be there when you needed it, whenever you were called to serve a cause higher than self-interest. I felt it one bright spring day on a lawn. I was being commissioned to defend my country. We were not then at war, but I was heading for an unknown service that I knew would require all I had to offer, perhaps my life. I raised my right hand with the others to pledge that I would defend my country with "true faith and allegiance" and that "I take this obligation freely, without any mental reservations or purpose of evasion; and that I will well and faithfully discharge the duties of the office upon which I am about to enter; So help me God."⁴

I have no doubt that the power to keep that promise, which I kept, had been forged in me from the time I was a deacon. In my early years in the priesthood, I sat a number of times in what was then called a "missionary farewell." There are now so many rising to the call to serve that we let them speak only briefly in a sacrament meeting before they go. But then an entire meeting was focused on the missionary who was embarking. It always included some selected music. I can still feel what I felt as a quartet of returned mis-

sionaries would sing, "I'll go where you want me to go, dear Lord," and the words went on to pledge, "I'll say what you want me to say," and finally, "I'll be what you want me to be."⁵

Promises for faithful priesthood service

My heart was stirred in those days then as it is now with a conviction that the promise was true for me and for us in all our priesthood service. We will find joy in going wherever the Lord would have us serve. We will be given the revelation to speak His words to invite Heavenly Father's children to become changed by the Atonement and fit to go home and live with Him. And I felt then as I do now that our faithful service would allow Him to change our hearts to fit us for His companionship and to serve Him forever.

I bear you my witness that when we give our all in priesthood service, the Lord will give us all the courage we need and the assurance that He goes with us and that angels will bear us up.

I testify that we are called of God. This is His true Church, and you hold His everlasting priesthood. I am a witness that President Thomas S. Monson holds all the keys of the priesthood and exercises them in the world today. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

1. Doctrine and Covenants 84:88.
2. 2 Kings 6:15–17.
3. Doctrine and Covenants 4:2.
4. "Oaths of Enlistment and Oaths of Office," <http://www.army.mil/CMH/faq/oaths.htm>.
5. "I'll Go Where You Want Me to Go," *Hymns*, no. 270.

President Monson

We remind you that the Tabernacle Choir broadcast will be from 9:30 to 10:00 tomorrow morning. The Sunday morning session will immediately follow.

We express appreciation to the priesthood choir from the Provo Missionary Training Center for the beautiful music they've provided this evening and to the speakers for their inspiring messages.

Following my remarks, this session will conclude with the choir singing "Hark, All Ye Nations!" The benediction will be offered by Elder Keith R. Edwards of the Seventy.

President Thomas S. Monson

You've seen a witness tonight of the strength of the two counselors in this First Presidency. I stand before you and declare your First Presidency is united as one under the direction of the Lord Jesus Christ.

I want to especially thank this missionary choir. I had an experience I think they may be interested in, and you may find it interesting also. Many years ago I had a desperate call from the head of the missionary training center. He said, "President Monson, I have a missionary who is going home. Nothing can prevent him from quitting."

I replied, "Well, that's not singular. It's happened before. What's his problem?"

He said, "He's been called to a Spanish-speaking mission, and he's absolutely certain he cannot learn Spanish."

I said, "I have a suggestion for you. Tomorrow morning have him attend a class learning Japanese. And then have him report to you at 12:00 noon."

The next morning he phoned at 10:00! He said, "The young man is here with me now, and he wants me to know he's absolutely certain he can learn Spanish."

When there's a will, there's a way.

Counsel for difficult times

Now, as I speak to you tonight, truly you are a royal priesthood, assembled in many places but in unity. In all likelihood this is the largest assemblage of priesthood holders ever to come together. Your devotion to your sacred callings is inspiring. Your desire to learn your duty is evident.

The purity of your souls brings heaven closer to you and your families.

Many areas of the world have experienced difficult economic times. Businesses have failed, jobs have been lost, and investments have been jeopardized. We must make certain that those for whom we share responsibility do not go hungry or unclothed or unsheltered. When the priesthood of this Church works together as one in meeting these vexing conditions, near miracles take place.

We urge all Latter-day Saints to be prudent in their planning, to be conservative in their living, and to avoid excessive or unnecessary debt. The financial affairs of the Church are being managed in this manner, for we are aware that your tithing and other contributions have not come without sacrifice and are sacred funds.

Let us make our homes sanctuaries of righteousness, places of prayer, and abodes of love that we might merit the blessings that can come only from our Heavenly Father. We need His guidance in our daily lives.

In this vast throng are priesthood power and the capacity to reach out and share the glorious gospel with others. As has been mentioned, we have the hands to lift others from complacency and inactivity. We have the hearts to serve faithfully in our priesthood callings and thereby inspire others to walk on higher ground and to avoid the swamps of sin which threaten to engulf so many. The worth of souls is indeed great in the sight of God. Ours is the precious privilege, armed with this knowledge, to make a difference in the

lives of others. The words found in Ezekiel could well pertain to all of us who follow the Savior in this sacred work:

“A new heart . . . will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you. . . .

“And I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them.

“And ye shall dwell in the land that I gave to your fathers; and ye shall be my people, and I will be your God.”¹

How might we merit this promise? What will qualify us to receive this blessing? Is there a guide to follow?

May I suggest three imperatives for our consideration. They apply to the deacon as well as to the high priest. They are within our reach. A kind Heavenly Father will help us in our quest.

First, learn what we should learn.

Second, do what we should do.

And third, be what we should be.

Let us discuss these objectives, that we might be profitable servants in the sight of our Lord.

Learn what we should learn

First, *learn what we should learn*. The Apostle Paul placed an urgency on our efforts to learn. He said to the Philippians, “One thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.”² And to the Hebrews he urged, “Lay aside . . . sin[;] . . . let us run with patience the race . . . set before us, looking [for an example] unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith.”³

The perfect plan of service

President Stephen L. Richards, who served for many years in the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles and then in the First Presidency, spoke often to holders of the priesthood and emphasized his philosophy pertaining to it. He declared: “The

Priesthood is usually simply defined as ‘the power of God delegated to man.’ This definition, I think, is accurate.”

He continued: “But for practical purposes I like to define the Priesthood in terms of service and I frequently call it ‘the perfect plan of service.’ I do so because it seems to me that it is only through the utilization of the divine power conferred on men that they may ever hope to realize the full import and vitality of this endowment. It is an instrument of service . . . and the man who fails to use it is apt to lose it, for we are plainly told by revelation that he who neglects it ‘shall not be counted worthy to stand.’”⁴

President Harold B. Lee, 11th President of the Church and one of the great teachers in the Church, put his counsel in easy-to-understand terms. Said he: “When one becomes a holder of the priesthood, he becomes an agent of the Lord. He should think of his calling as though he were on the Lord’s errand.”⁵

Now, some of you may be shy by nature or consider yourselves inadequate to respond affirmatively to a calling. Remember that this work is not yours and mine alone. It is the Lord’s work, and when we are on the Lord’s errand, we are entitled to the Lord’s help. Remember that the Lord will shape the back to bear the burden placed upon it.

Learning on an Aaronic Priesthood outing

While the formal classroom may be intimidating at times, some of the most effective teaching takes place other than in the chapel or the classroom. Well do I remember that some years ago, members holding the Aaronic Priesthood would eagerly look forward to an annual outing commemorating the restoration of the Aaronic Priesthood. By the busload the young men of our stake journeyed 90 miles north to the Clarkston Cemetery, where we viewed the grave of Martin Harris, one of the Three Witnesses of the

Book of Mormon. While surrounding the beautiful granite shaft which marks the grave, a high councilor would present background concerning the life of Martin Harris, read from the Book of Mormon his testimony, and then bear his own witness to the truth. The young men listened with rapt attention, touched the granite marker, and pondered the words they had heard and the feelings they had felt.

At a park in Logan, lunch was enjoyed. The group of young men would then lie down on the lawn at the Logan Temple and gaze upward at its lofty spires. Often beautiful white clouds would hurry past the spires, moved along by a gentle breeze. The purpose of temples was taught. Covenants and promises became much more than words. The desire to be worthy to enter those temple doors entered those youthful hearts. Heaven was very close. Learning what we should learn was assured.

Do what we should do

Number two, *do what we should do*. In a revelation on priesthood, given through Joseph Smith the Prophet, recorded as the 107th section of the Doctrine and Covenants, “learning” moves to “doing” as we read, “Wherefore, now let every man learn his duty, and to act in the office in which he is appointed, in all diligence.”⁶

Each priesthood holder attending this session tonight has a calling to serve, to put forth his best efforts in the work assigned to him. No assignment is menial in the work of the Lord, for each has eternal consequences. President John Taylor warned us, “If you do not magnify your callings, God will hold you responsible for those whom you might have saved had you done your duty.”⁷ And who of us can afford to be responsible for the delay of eternal life of a human soul? If great joy is the reward of saving one soul, then how terrible must be the remorse of those whose timid efforts have allowed a child

of God to go unwarned or unaided so that he has to wait till a dependable servant of God comes along.

The old adage is ever true: “Do your duty, that is best; leave unto the Lord the rest.”

Service of Juliusz and Dorothy Fussek

Most service given by priesthood holders is accomplished quietly, without fanfare. A friendly smile, a warm handclasp, a sincere testimony of truth can literally lift lives, change human nature, and save precious souls.

An example of such service was the missionary experience of Juliusz and Dorothy Fussek, who were called to fill a two-year mission in Poland. Brother Fussek was born in Poland. He spoke the language. He loved the people. Sister Fussek was English and knew little of Poland and its people.

Trusting in the Lord, they embarked on their assignment. The living conditions were primitive, the work lonely, their task immense. A mission had not at that time been established in Poland. The assignment given the Fusseks was to prepare the way, that a mission could be established so that other missionaries could be called to serve, people could be taught, converts could be baptized, branches could be established, and chapels could be erected.

Did Elder and Sister Fussek despair because of the enormity of their assignment? Not for a moment. They knew their calling was from God. They prayed for His divine help, and they devoted themselves wholeheartedly to their work. They remained in Poland not two years but five years. All of the foregoing objectives were realized.

Elders Russell M. Nelson, Hans B. Ringer, and I, accompanied by Elder Fussek, met with Minister Adam Wopatka of the Polish government, and we heard him say, “Your church is welcome here. You may build your buildings; you may

send your missionaries. You are welcome in Poland. This man," pointing to Juliusz Fussek, "has served your church well. You can be grateful for his example and his work."

Like the Fusseks, let us do what we should do in the work of the Lord. Then we can, with Juliusz and Dorothy Fussek, echo the Psalm: "My help cometh from the Lord, which made heaven and earth . . . : he that keepeth thee will not slumber. Behold, he that keepeth Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep."⁸

Be what we should be

Third, *be what we should be*. Paul counseled his beloved friend and associate Timothy, "Be thou an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity."⁹

I would urge all of us to pray concerning our assignments and to seek divine help, that we might be successful in accomplishing that which we are called to do. Someone has said that "the recognition of power higher than man himself does not in any sense debase him."¹⁰ He must seek, believe in, pray, and hope that he will find. No such sincere, prayerful effort will go unanswered: that is the very constitution of the philosophy of faith. Divine favor will attend those who humbly seek it.

From the Book of Mormon comes counsel that says it all. The Lord speaks: "Therefore, what manner of men ought ye to be? Verily I say unto you, even as I am."¹¹

And what manner of man was He? What example did He set in His service? From John chapter 10 we learn:

"I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep.

"But he that is an hireling, and not the shepherd, whose own the sheep are not, seeth the wolf coming, and leaveth the sheep, and fleeth: and the wolf catcheth them, and scattereth the sheep.

"The hireling fleeth, because he is an hireling, and careth not for the sheep."

Said the Lord: "I am the good shepherd, and know my sheep, and am known of mine.

"As the Father knoweth me, even so know I the Father: and I lay down my life for the sheep."¹²

Brethren, may we *learn what we should learn, do what we should do, and be what we should be*. By so doing, the blessings of heaven will attend. We will know that we are not alone. He who notes the sparrow's fall will, in His own way, acknowledge us.

Miraculous rescue of Theron W. Borup

Several years ago I received a letter from a longtime friend. He bore his testimony in that letter. I would like to share part of it with you tonight, since it illustrates the strength of the priesthood in one who learned what he should learn, who did what he should do, and who always tried to be what he should be. I shall read excerpts of that letter from my friend Theron W. Borup, who passed away three years ago at the age of 90:

"At the age of eight, when I was baptized and received the Holy Ghost, I was much impressed about being good and able to have the Holy Ghost to be a help throughout my life. I was told that the Holy Ghost associated only in good company and that when evil entered our lives, he would leave. Not knowing when I would need his promptings and guidance, I tried to so live that I would not lose this gift. On one occasion it saved my life.

"During World War II, I was an engineer-gunner in a B-24 bomber fighting in the South Pacific. . . . One day there was an announcement that the longest bombing flight ever made would be attempted to knock out an oil refinery. The promptings of the Spirit told me I would be assigned on this flight but that I would not lose my life. At the time I was the president of the LDS group.

“The combat was ferocious as we flew over Borneo. Our plane was hit by attacking planes and soon burst into flames, and the pilot told us to prepare to jump. I went out last. We were shot at by enemy pilots as we floated down. I had trouble inflating my life raft. Bobbing up and down in the water, I began to drown and passed out. I came to momentarily and cried, ‘God save me!’ . . . Again I tried inflating the life raft and this time was successful. With just enough air in it to keep me afloat, I rolled over on top of it, too exhausted to move.

“For three days we floated about in enemy territory with ships all about us and planes overhead. Why they couldn’t see a yellow group of rafts on blue water is a mystery,” he wrote. “A storm came up, and waves thirty feet high almost tore our rafts apart. Three days went by with no food or water. The others asked me if I prayed. I answered that I did pray and we would indeed be rescued. That evening we saw our submarine that was there to rescue us, but it passed by. The next morning it did [the same. We knew] this was the last day [it would] be in the area. Then came the promptings of the Holy Ghost. ‘You have the priesthood. Command the sub to pick you up.’ Silently I prayed, ‘In the name of Jesus Christ, and by the power of the priesthood, turn about and pick us up.’ In a few minutes, they were

alongside of us. When on deck, the captain . . . said, ‘I don’t know how we ever found you, for we were not even looking for you.’ I knew.”¹³

I leave with you my testimony that this work in which we are engaged is true. The Lord is at the helm. That we may ever follow Him is my sincere prayer, and I ask it in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

1. Ezekiel 36:26–28.
2. Philippians 3:13–14.
3. Hebrews 12:1–2.
4. Stephen L. Richards, in Conference Report, Apr. 1937, 46.
5. Harold B. Lee, *Stand Ye in Holy Places* (1974), 255.
6. Doctrine and Covenants 107:99.
7. John Taylor, *Deseret News*, Aug. 7, 1878, 418.
8. Psalm 121:2–4.
9. 1 Timothy 4:12.
10. Stephen L. Richards, in Conference Report, Oct. 1937, 35.
11. 3 Nephi 27:27.
12. John 10:11–15.
13. Personal correspondence; italics added.

The choir sang “Hark, All Ye Nations!”

Elder Keith R. Edwards offered the benediction.

SUNDAY MORNING SESSION

The fourth session of the 178th Semi-annual General Conference convened in the Conference Center at 10:00 on Sunday, October 5, 2008. President Thomas S. Monson conducted this session.

The Tabernacle Choir provided the music. Mack Wilberg directed the choir, and Andrew Unsworth and Clay Christiansen were the organists. The choir sang

“Now Let Us Rejoice” to begin the session.

President Thomas S. Monson

We welcome you this morning to the fourth general session of the 178th Semi-annual General Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. We

extend our greetings to all those who are participating with us and express gratitude to the owners and operators of the facilities who are broadcasting this conference.

The music for this session will be by the Tabernacle Choir, under the direction of Mack Wilberg, with Andrew Unsworth and Clay Christiansen at the organ.

The choir opened this session by singing "Now Let Us Rejoice" and will now favor us with "I Know That My Redeemer Lives." The invocation will then be offered by Elder Earl C. Tingey, who was released yesterday as a Seventy and as a member of the Presidency of the Seventy after many, many years of service.

The choir sang "I Know That My Redeemer Lives."

Elder Earl C. Tingey offered the invocation.

The choir sang "Oh, What Songs of the Heart."

President Monson

The choir just sang "Oh, What Songs of the Heart." We shall now be pleased to hear from President Henry B. Eyring, First Counselor in the First Presidency, after which we shall hear from Elder Robert D. Hales of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. He will be followed by Bishop Keith B. McMullin of the Presiding Bishopric.

The choir and congregation will then sing "Rejoice, the Lord Is King!" Following the singing, we will hear from Sister Elaine S. Dalton, Young Women general president, and she will be followed by the choir singing "I Feel My Savior's Love." Elder M. Russell Ballard of the Quorum of the Twelve will then address us.

President Henry B. Eyring

Our hearts knit as one

My beloved brothers and sisters, it is a joy to be gathered with you on this Sabbath morning. We live in many different circumstances. We will come from every nation and many ethnic backgrounds into the kingdom of God. And that prophesied gathering will accelerate.

We see increased conflict between peoples in the world around us. Those divisions and differences could infect us. That is why my message of hope today is that a great day of unity is coming. The Lord Jehovah will return to live with those who have become His people and will find them united, of one heart, unified with Him and with our Heavenly Father.

You have heard that message of unity from me more than once. I may well speak of it in the future. I have heard it from every prophet of God in my lifetime. A plea

for unity was the last message I remember from President David O. McKay. The Lord's prophets have always called for unity. The need for that gift to be granted to us and the challenge to maintain it will grow greater in the days ahead, in which we will be prepared as a people for our glorious destiny.

My message is that we are doing better. Fathers and mothers are pleading for unity in their homes, and those prayers are being answered. Families are praying together night and morning. I was invited to kneel at bedtime with a family when I was a guest in their home. The smallest child was asked to be voice. He prayed like a patriarch for every person in the family, by name. I opened my eyes for an instant to see the faces of the other children and the parents. I could tell that they were joining their faith and their hearts in that little boy's prayer.

Some Relief Society sisters recently prayed together as they prepared to visit for the first time a young widow whose husband died suddenly. They wanted to know what to do and how to work together to help prepare the home for family and friends who would come at the time of the funeral. They needed to know what words of comfort they could speak for the Lord. An answer to their prayer came. When they arrived at the house, each sister moved to complete a task. The house was ready so quickly that some sisters regretted not being able to do more. Words of comfort were spoken which fit perfectly together. They had given the Lord's service as one, hearts knit together.

You have seen evidence, as I have, that we are moving toward becoming one. The miracle of unity is being granted to us as we pray and work for it in the Lord's way. Our hearts will be knit together in unity. God has promised that blessing to His faithful Saints whatever their differences in background and whatever conflict rages around them. He was praying for us as well as His disciples when He asked His Father that we might be one.¹

Unity brings joy

The reason we pray and ask for that blessing is the same reason the Father is granting it. We know from experience that joy comes when we are blessed with unity. We yearn, as spirit children of our Heavenly Father, for that joy which we once had with Him in the life before this one. His desire is to grant us that sacred wish for unity out of His love for us.

He cannot grant it to us as individuals. The joy of unity He wants so much to give us is not solitary. We must seek it and qualify for it with others. It is not surprising, then, that God urges us to gather so that He can bless us. He wants us to gather into families. He has established classes, wards, and branches and commanded us to meet together often. In those gatherings,

which God has designed for us, lies our great opportunity. We can pray and work for the unity that will bring us joy and multiply our power to serve.

To the Three Nephites, the Savior promised joy in unity with Him as their final reward after their faithful service. He said, "Ye shall have fulness of joy; and ye shall sit down in the kingdom of my Father; yea, your joy shall be full, even as the Father hath given me fulness of joy; and ye shall be even as I am, and I am even as the Father; and the Father and I are one."²

Alma's people become of one heart

The Lord has given us guides to know what to do to receive the blessing and joy of ever-increasing unity. The Book of Mormon recounts a time of success. It was in the days of Alma at the Waters of Mormon. What the people did in those difficult and dangerous circumstances gives us both a guide and encouragement.

Everything Alma and his people were inspired to do was pointed at helping people choose to have their hearts changed through the Atonement of Jesus Christ. That is the only way God can grant the blessing of being of one heart.

In Mosiah we read:

"And they were called the church of God, or the church of Christ, from that time forward. And it came to pass that whosoever was baptized by the power and authority of God was added to his church. . . .

"And he commanded them that they should teach nothing save it were the things which he had taught, and which had been spoken by the mouth of the holy prophets.

"Yea, even he commanded them that they should preach nothing save it were repentance and faith on the Lord, who had redeemed his people.

"And he commanded them that there should be no contention one with another,

but that they should look forward with one eye, having one faith and one baptism, having their hearts knit together in unity and in love one towards another.

“And thus he commanded them to preach. And thus they became the children of God.”³

That is why Alma commanded the people to teach faith and repentance. That is why my children came to expect in every lesson in family night that I would find a way to encourage someone to testify of the Savior and His mission. Sometimes the parents did it. On our best nights we found a way to encourage the children to do it, either by presenting the lesson or answering questions. When testimony about the Savior was borne, the Holy Ghost verified it. On those nights we felt our hearts being knit together.

Principles that lead to greater unity

In addition to ordinances, there are principles we are following as a people which are leading to greater unity.

Seek revelation; keep the commandments

One of those principles is revelation. Revelation is the only way we can know how to follow the will of the Lord together. It requires light from above. The Holy Ghost will testify to our hearts, and the hearts of those gathered around with us, what He would have us do. And it is by keeping His commandments that we can have our hearts knit together as one.

Be humble; be peacemakers

A second principle to guide our progress to become one is to be humble. Pride is the great enemy of unity. You have seen and felt its terrible effects. Just days ago I watched as two people—good people—began with a mild disagreement. It started as a discussion of what was true but became a contest about who was right. Voices

became gradually louder. Faces became a little more flushed. Instead of talking about the issue, people began talking about themselves, giving evidence why their view, given their great ability and background, was more likely to be right.

You would have felt alarm as I did. We have seen the life-destroying effects of such tragic conflict. You and I know people who left the fellowship of the Saints over injured pride.

Happily I am seeing more and more skillful peacemakers who calm troubled waters before harm is done. You could be one of those peacemakers, whether you are in the conflict or an observer.

One way I have seen it done is to search for anything on which we agree. To be that peacemaker, you need to have the simple faith that as children of God, with all our differences, it is likely that in a strong position we take, there will be elements of truth. The great peacemaker, the restorer of unity, is the one who finds a way to help people see the truth they share. That truth they share is always greater and more important to them than their differences. You can help yourself and others to see that common ground if you ask for help from God and then act. He will answer your prayer to help restore peace, as He has mine.

That same principle applies as we build unity with people who are from vastly different backgrounds. The children of God have more in common than they have differences. And even the differences can be seen as an opportunity. God will help us see a difference in someone else not as a source of irritation but as a contribution. The Lord can help you see and value what another person brings which you lack. More than once the Lord has helped me see His kindness in giving me association with someone whose difference from me was just the help I needed. That has been the Lord's way of adding something I lacked to serve Him better.

Speak well of each other

That leads to another principle of unity. It is to speak well of each other. Think of the last time you were asked what you thought about how someone else was doing in your family or in the Church. It happened to me more than once in the past week. Now, there are times we must judge others. Sometimes we are required to pronounce such judgments. But more often we can make a choice. For instance, suppose someone asks you what you think of the new bishop.

As we get better and better at forging unity, we will think of a scripture when we hear that question:

“And now, my brethren, seeing that ye know the light by which ye may judge, which light is the light of Christ, see that ye do not judge wrongfully; for with that same judgment which ye judge ye shall also be judged.”⁴

Realizing that you see others in an imperfect light will make you likely to be a little more generous in what you say. In addition to that scripture, you might remember your mother saying—mine did—“If you can’t say anything good about a person, don’t say anything at all.”

That will help you look for what is best in the bishop’s performance and character. The Savior, as your loving judge, will surely do that as He judges your performance and mine. The scripture and what you heard from your mother may well lead you to describe what is best in the bishop’s performance and his good intent. I can promise you a feeling of peace and joy when you speak generously of others in the Light of Christ. You will feel, for instance, unity with that bishop and with the person who asked your opinion, not because the bishop is perfect or because the person asking you shares your generous evaluation. It will be because the Lord will let you feel His appreciation for choosing to step away from the possibility of sowing seeds of disunity.

We must follow that same principle as the Lord gathers more and more people who are not like us. What will become more obvious to us is that the Atonement brings the same changes in all of us. We become disciples who are meek, loving, easy to be entreated, and at the same time fearless and faithful in all things. We still live in different countries, but we come into the Church through a process that changes us. We become by the gifts of the Spirit what the Apostle Paul saw:

“For through him we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father. Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellowcitizens with the saints, and of the household of God.”⁵

With the unity I see increasing, the Lord will be able to perform what the world will think as miraculous. The Saints can accomplish any purpose of the Lord when fully united in righteousness.

Move together in power

Presidents of countries, governors, and leaders of worldwide charitable organizations have praised us—in my hearing—with words like these: “Your church was the first on the ground to help when disaster came. Hundreds of your people arrived who brought everything with them which the survivors needed. They even brought their own tents and supplies. They were tireless and cheerful. They seemed to know where to go and when.” Then there has come a line usually something like this: “Your church knows how to organize to get things done.”

I thank them without saying that the miracle lies not in organization alone but in the people’s hearts. The Saints came in the name of the Lord to give the succor He would give. They came listening to the direction of the Lord’s chosen leaders. Because their hearts were knit, they were magnified in their power.

I bear you my solemn witness that the unity we now experience will increase.

God the Father lives. He hears and answers our prayers in love. The Savior Jesus Christ, resurrected and glorious, lives and reaches out to us in mercy. This is His true Church. President Monson is the living prophet of God. If we are united in sustaining him with all our hearts, with willing obedience to do what God would have us do, we will move together in power to go wherever God would have us go and to become what He wants us to be.

I leave you my blessing that you will enjoy unity in your homes and in the

Church. And I leave you the Lord's promise that you will have the righteous desire of your heart for that joy in unity. In the sacred name of Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

1. See John 17:21; see also Doctrine and Covenants 50:43; 93:3.
2. 3 Nephi 28:10.
3. Mosiah 18:17, 19–22.
4. Moroni 7:18.
5. Ephesians 2:18–19.

Elder Robert D. Hales

Christlike responses to antagonists

We have gathered together as one, we have taken upon us the name of Jesus Christ, and we are Christians. One of the questions we would ask: why then, if we have that love of the Savior, would someone want to be an antagonist or to attack us?

Recently a group of bright, faithful young Latter-day Saints wrote down some of the most pressing questions on their minds. One sister asked, “Why doesn’t the Church defend itself more actively when accusations are made against it?”

To her inquiry I would say that one of mortality’s great tests comes when our beliefs are questioned or criticized. In such moments we may want to respond aggressively—to “put up our dukes.” But these are important opportunities to step back, pray, and follow the Savior’s example. Remember that Jesus Himself was despised and rejected by the world. And in Lehi’s dream, those coming to the Savior also endured “mocking and pointing . . . fingers” (1 Nephi 8:27). “The world hath hated [my disciples],” Jesus said, “because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world” (John 17:14). But when we respond to our accusers as the Savior did, we not only become more Christlike, we invite

others to feel His love and follow Him as well.

To respond in a Christlike way cannot be scripted or based on a formula. The Savior responded differently in every situation. When He was confronted by wicked King Herod, He remained silent. When He stood before Pilate, He bore a simple and powerful testimony of His divinity and purpose. Facing the moneychangers who were defiling the temple, He exercised His divine responsibility to preserve and protect that which was sacred. Lifted up upon a cross, He uttered the incomparable Christian response: “Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do” (Luke 23:34).

Christian courage in responses

Some people mistakenly think responses such as silence, meekness, forgiveness, and bearing humble testimony are passive or weak. But to “love [our] enemies, bless them that curse [us], do good to them that hate [us], and pray for them which despitefully use [us], and persecute [us]” (Matthew 5:44) takes faith, strength, and, most of all, Christian courage.

The Prophet Joseph Smith demonstrated this courage throughout his life. Though he “suffer[ed] severe persecution

at the hands of all classes of men, both religious and irreligious” (Joseph Smith—History 1:27), he did not retaliate or give in to hatred. Like all true disciples of Christ, he stood with the Savior by loving others in a tolerant and compassionate way. *That* is Christian courage.

When we do not retaliate—when we turn the other cheek and resist feelings of anger—we too stand with the Savior. We show forth His love, which is the only power that can subdue the adversary and answer our accusers without accusing them in return. That is not weakness. *That* is Christian courage.

Opportunity in the midst of opposition

Through the years we learn that challenges to our faith are not new, and they aren’t likely to disappear soon. But *true disciples of Christ see opportunity in the midst of opposition.*

In the Book of Mormon, the prophet Abinadi was bound and brought before the evil King Noah. Although the king vigorously opposed Abinadi and eventually sentenced him to death, Abinadi boldly taught the gospel and bore his testimony anyway. Because Abinadi took advantage of that opportunity, a priest named Alma was converted to the gospel and brought many souls unto Christ. The courage of Abinadi and Alma was Christian courage.

Experience shows that seasons of negative publicity about the Church can help accomplish the Lord’s purposes. In 1983 the First Presidency wrote to Church leaders:

“Opposition may be in itself an opportunity. Among the continuing challenges faced by our missionaries is a lack of interest in religious matters and in our message. These criticisms create . . . interest in the Church. . . . This provides an opportunity [for members] to present the truth to those whose attention is thus directed toward us.”¹

We can take advantage of such opportunities in many ways: a kind letter to the editor, a conversation with a friend, a comment on a blog, or a reassuring word to one who has made a disparaging comment. We can answer with love those who have been influenced by misinformation and prejudice—who are “kept from the truth because they know not where to find it” (D&C 123:12). I assure you that to answer our accusers in this way is never weakness. *It is* Christian courage in action.

Respond in ways that invite the Spirit

As we respond to others, each circumstance will be different. Fortunately, the Lord knows the hearts of our accusers and how we can most effectively respond to them. *As true disciples seek guidance from the Spirit, they receive inspiration tailored to each encounter.* And in every encounter, *true disciples respond in ways that invite the Spirit of the Lord.*

Paul reminded the Corinthians that his preaching was “not with [the] enticing words of man’s wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power” (1 Corinthians 2:4). Because that power resides in the Spirit of the Lord, we must never become contentious when we are discussing our faith. As almost every missionary learns, Bible bashing always drives the Spirit away. The Savior has said, “He that hath the spirit of contention is not of me” (3 Nephi 11:29).

More regrettable than the Church being accused of not being Christian is when Church members react to such accusations in an un-Christlike way! May our conversations with others always be marked by the fruits of the Spirit—“love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, [and] temperance” (Galatians 5:22–23). To be meek, as defined in Webster’s dictionary, is “manifesting patience and long-suffering; enduring injury without resentment.”² Meekness is not weakness. It is a badge of Christian courage.

This is especially important in our interactions with members of other Christian denominations. Surely our Heavenly Father is saddened—and the devil laughs—when we contentiously debate doctrinal differences with our Christian neighbors.

This is not to suggest that we compromise our principles or dilute our beliefs. We cannot change the doctrines of the restored gospel, even if teaching and obeying them makes us unpopular in the eyes of the world. Yet even as we feel to speak the word of God with boldness, we must pray to be filled with the Holy Ghost (see Acts 4:29, 31). We should never confuse boldness with Satan's counterfeit: overbearance (see Alma 38:12). True disciples speak with quiet confidence, not boastful pride.

Slow to take offense, quick to forgive

As true disciples, our primary concern must be others' welfare, not personal vindication. Questions and criticisms give us an opportunity to reach out to others and demonstrate that they matter to our Heavenly Father and to us. Our aim should be to help them understand the truth, not to defend our egos or score points in a theological debate. Our heartfelt testimonies are the most powerful answer we can give our accusers. And such testimonies can be borne only in love and meekness. We should be like Edward Partridge, of whom the Lord said, "His heart is pure before me, for he is like unto Nathanael of old, in whom there is no guile" (D&C 41:11). To be guileless is to have a childlike innocence, to be slow to take offense and quick to forgive.

These qualities are first learned in the home and family and can be practiced in all our relationships. To be guileless is to look for our own fault first. When accused, we should ask as the Savior's Apostles did, "Lord, is it I?" (Matthew 26:22). If we listen to the answer given by the Spirit, we can, if needed, make corrections, apologize, seek forgiveness, and do better.

Without guile, *true disciples avoid being unduly judgmental of others' views.* Many of us have cultivated strong friendships with those who are not members of our Church—schoolmates, colleagues at work, and friends and neighbors throughout the world. We need them, and they need us. As President Thomas S. Monson has taught, "Let us learn respect for others. . . . None of us lives alone—in our city, our nation, or our world."³

Do not leave the high ground

As the Savior demonstrated with Herod, *sometimes true disciples must show Christian courage by saying nothing at all.* Once when I was golfing, I barely brushed up against a large cholla cactus, which seems to shoot needles like a porcupine. Thorns from that plant stuck all over my clothing, even though I had barely touched the cactus plant. Some situations are like that plant: they can only injure us. In such instances, we are better off to keep our distance and simply walk away. As we do, some may try to provoke us and engage us in argument. In the Book of Mormon, we read about Lehonti and his men camped upon a mount. The traitorous Amalickiah urged Lehonti to "come down" and meet him in the valley. But when Lehonti left the high ground, he was poisoned "by degrees" until he died, and his army fell into Amalickiah's hands (see Alma 47).

By arguments and accusations, some people bait us to leave the high ground. The high ground is where the light is. It's where we see the first light of morning and the last light in the evening. It is the safe ground. It is true and where knowledge is. Sometimes others want us to come down off the high ground and join them in a theological scrum in the mud. These few contentious individuals are set on picking religious fights, online or in person. We are always better staying on the higher ground of mutual respect and love.

In doing so, we follow the example of the prophet Nehemiah, who built a wall

around Jerusalem. Nehemiah's enemies entreated him to meet them on the plain, where "they thought to do [him] mischief." Unlike Leonti, Nehemiah wisely refused their offer with this message: "I am doing a great work, so that I cannot come down: why should the work cease, whilst I leave it, and come down to you?" (Nehemiah 6:2-3). We too have a great work to do, which will not be accomplished if we allow ourselves to stop and argue and be distracted. Instead we should muster Christian courage and move on. As we read in Psalms, "Fret not thyself because of evil-doers" (Psalm 37:1).

Evil will always be with us in this world. Part of mortality's great test is to be in the world without becoming like the world. In His Intercessory Prayer, the Savior asked His Heavenly Father, "I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil" (John 17:15). But even as the Savior warned of persecution, He promised peace: "Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you. . . . Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid" (John 14:27). I testify that with the mantle of His peace upon us, the First Presidency's promise will be fulfilled: "The opposition which may seem hard to bear will be a blessing to the kingdom of God upon the earth."⁴

Love our accusers

To my inquiring sister and all who seek to know how we should respond to our accusers, I reply, we *love* them. What-

ever their race, creed, religion, or political persuasion, if we follow Christ and show forth His courage, we must love them. We do not feel we are *better* than they are. Rather, we desire with our love to show them a *better way*—the way of Jesus Christ. His way leads to the gate of baptism, the strait and narrow path of righteous living, and the temple of God. *He* is "the way, the truth, and the life" (John 14:6). Only through Him can we and all our brothers and sisters inherit the greatest gift we can receive—eternal life and eternal happiness. To help them, to be an example for them, is not for the weak. It is for the strong. It is for you and me, Latter-day Saints who pay the price of discipleship by answering our accusers with Christian courage.

I conclude by making the testimony of Mormon my own: "Behold, I am a disciple of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. I have been called of him to declare his word among his people, that they might have everlasting life" (3 Nephi 5:13). I bear my special witness of Him—that our lives can be everlasting because His love is everlasting. That we may share His eternal, unconditional love with our brothers and sisters everywhere is my humble prayer in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

1. First Presidency letter, Dec. 1, 1983.
2. *Webster's Third New International Dictionary* (1993), "meek," 1403.
3. Thomas S. Monson, "In Quest of the Abundant Life," *Ensign*, Mar. 1988, 3.
4. First Presidency letter, Dec. 1, 1983.

Bishop Keith B. McMullin

God loves and helps all of His children

One of the overarching truths of the Restoration is that God lives and dwells in His heavens, that He is an exalted man with "a body of flesh and bones,"¹ and that

He is yesterday, today, and forever the same unchangeable God,² the fountain of all virtue and truth.

Adam and Eve were the first of His mortal children upon this earth. Of their advent, He said, "And I, God, created

man in mine own image, in the image of mine Only Begotten created I him; male and female created I them.”³

This truth elevates the human family. Men and women are wondrous creations endowed with divine attributes. At the time of Creation, God placed in Adam and Eve the supernal capacity to bear children in their likeness. We are all, therefore, in His image.

Help from our fellowman

We do, however, contend with serious mortal frailties and hazards. Sickness, aging, and death are inescapable. Hardships and heartaches are part of life’s journey. Personal dispositions, appetites, and passions clamor for gratification.

For all these reasons and more, we need Heavenly Father’s help. An important source of this help comes through man’s service to his fellowman.⁴ The commandment is to “love thy neighbour as thyself.”⁵ Because we are all brothers and sisters, we are all “neighbors,” though separated at times by distance, culture, religion, or race. Said the Prophet Joseph, “A man filled with the love of God, is not content with blessing his family alone, but ranges through the whole world, anxious to bless the whole human race.”⁶ The Lord sets the example, “for he doeth that which is good among the children of men; . . . and he denieth none that come unto him, black and white, bond and free, male and female; and he remembereth the heathen; and all are alike unto God.”⁷

To provide for others in the Lord’s way, we strive to care for ourselves and sacrifice to help those in need. The poor labor for what they receive and seek the betterment of others as well.⁸ This pattern has been with us from the beginning.⁹

The Church welfare plan embodies this divine pattern, and faithful Church members follow it. Their offerings provide succor to the widow, care to the orphan, and refuge to the suffering.

A few years ago a high-ranking official from China visited Salt Lake City, toured Church sites, and spoke at Brigham Young University. Learning about the Church welfare program, he said, “If we all loved each other like this, the world would be a more peaceful place.”

Fasting and giving the value of the meals not eaten to help the poor captured his attention. At the conclusion of his visit to Welfare Square, he handed the manager a small red envelope—a “red pocket.” In China a “red pocket” is given as a gesture of love, blessing, and a wish for good fortune. “It does not contain much,” the visitor said, “but it represents the money I have saved from missing breakfast the last two mornings. I would like to give my fast offering to the Welfare program of the Church.”¹⁰

The Church welfare plan is God-inspired. Its tenets are fundamental to the salvation of man.¹¹ It is an ensign for service, a witness to the world that the Church of Jesus Christ has been restored. It is heaven’s help in practical ways. President Thomas S. Monson has said: “Welfare principles . . . do not change. They will not change. They are revealed truths.”¹²

Help through prayer

Another essential way to receive God’s help is through prayer. We are commanded to pray to God, our Father, in the name of Jesus Christ. The admonition is, “Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened.”¹³ Heavenly Father answers all sincere prayers.

As the Lord’s prophet, President Monson counsels:

“At times there appears to be no light at the tunnel’s end—no dawn to break the night’s darkness. . . . We feel abandoned, heartbroken, alone. If you find yourself in such a situation, I plead with you to turn to our Heavenly Father in faith. He will lift you and guide you. He will not always

take your afflictions from you, but He will comfort and lead you with love through whatever storm you face.”¹⁴

In the face of some needs, we turn to a form of prayer available only under the hands of those authorized to minister for God. Jesus Christ went forth “healing the sick, raising the dead,”¹⁵ and lifting up desperate souls. With the Restoration of the gospel came priesthood power and authority to continue this aspect of God’s work.¹⁶

When one is sick or deeply troubled, “call for the elders of the church; and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord: and the prayer of faith shall save the sick, and the Lord shall raise him up.”¹⁷ Faithful elders are commissioned to do what the Lord would do if He were present.¹⁸

A miraculous healing

If records had been kept of prayers answered, the world could not contain the many volumes. From Elder Glen L. Rudd, an emeritus General Authority and beloved associate, comes this treasured testimonial:

“I received a phone call informing me that a family member, a 12-year-old girl named Janice, was in the hospital with critical injuries. Her mother wanted her to receive a priesthood blessing.

“Elder Cowley and I went to the hospital. There we learned details of the accident. Janice had been hit by a city bus. The double rear wheels had passed over her head and body.

“Elder Cowley and I entered the room where Janice lay. She had a broken pelvis, a badly injured shoulder, multiple broken bones, and severe head injuries that were beyond repair. Nonetheless, it was our feeling that we should administer to her and bless her. I anointed her with oil, and Elder Cowley sealed the anointing. In a strong and resolute manner he blessed her to become well and whole and

to live a normal life. He blessed her that she would recover with no lasting effects from her many injuries. It was a great blessing and a truly magnificent moment.”

Elder Rudd goes on to say: “Janice didn’t move a muscle for more than a month. We never lost faith. A blessing had been pronounced that she would get well and have no lasting impairments.”

Elder Rudd concluded: “Many years have now passed since that hospital visit. I spoke with Janice recently. She is now 70 years of age, the mother of 3 children, the grandmother of 11 grandchildren. To this day, she has not suffered a single negative effect from her accident.”¹⁹

Hers is but one of many such healings. But none stands as a greater witness of how Heavenly Father helps His children through prayer than the one that took place in a hospital room, with 12-year-old Janice and two humble servants of God, some 58 years ago.

Help from Jesus Christ

The ultimate help from Heavenly Father comes to us through His Son, “for God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.”²⁰

It is with great reverence and awe that I bear witness of the Lord Jesus Christ. In doing so, I am reminded of how careful we must be in the use of His name. While His influence, teachings, and deliverance endear Him to us, we would do well not to speak of Him as though He were the friend next door.

He is the Firstborn of our Father’s spirit children. He did all that was ordained for Him to do—hence, all things give Him reverence and bear witness of Him.²¹ He told the ancient prophets what to write and reveals His will to His prophets today—and He fulfills their every word.²²

Begotten of God, He was born of the virgin Mary, conquered death, atoned for

the sins of the world, and brought salvation to both the living and dead. As our resurrected Lord, He ate fish and honeycomb with the Apostles and invited multitudes on both hemispheres to feel the wounds in His hands, feet, and side that all might know He is the God of Israel—He is the living Christ. To all He declares:

“I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live:

“And whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die.”²³

He is our Lawgiver and Judge, the Redeemer of the world. At His Second Coming, “the government shall be upon his shoulder; and his name shall be called, Wonderful, Counselor, The Mighty God, The Everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace.”²⁴ Of this I bear witness in the most sacred name of Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

1. Doctrine and Covenants 130:22.
2. See Doctrine and Covenants 20:17.
3. Moses 2:27; see also Genesis 1:27.
4. See Mosiah 2:17.
5. Matthew 22:39.
6. *History of the Church*, 4:227.
7. 2 Nephi 26:33.
8. See Doctrine and Covenants 56:16–18; 78:13–14; 104:13–18.
9. See Genesis 3:19; Exodus 23:10–11; Leviticus 19:9–10; Matthew 25:40; Mosiah 4:16–27; Moses 4:25; 5:1.

10. In Neil K. Newell, “The Red Pocket” (unpublished manuscript, 1999), 1.
11. See Mosiah 4:16–27.
12. Thomas S. Monson, “Guiding Principles of Personal and Family Welfare,” *Ensign*, Sept. 1986, 3.
13. Matthew 7:7; see also verse 8.
14. Thomas S. Monson, in Conference Report, Apr. 2008, 89; or *Ensign*, May 2008, 90.
15. Mosiah 3:5.
16. See Doctrine and Covenants 13; 27:12–13; 110:11–16; 128:20–21.
17. James 5:14–15.
18. See John 14:11–14; Articles of Faith 1:7; Bruce R. McConkie, *Mormon Doctrine*, 2nd ed. (1966), 345.
19. From a conversation with Glen L. Rudd; see also Glen L. Rudd, *Treasured Experiences of Glen L. Rudd* (self-published manuscript, 1995), Church Archives, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 270–72.
20. John 3:16.
21. See Moses 6:63.
22. See Amos 3:7; Doctrine and Covenants 1:38.
23. John 11:25–26.
24. 2 Nephi 19:6; see also Isaiah 9:6.

The choir and congregation sang
“Rejoice, the Lord Is King!”

Elaine S. Dalton

A focus on the temple

Last general conference I was called by President Monson to be the new Young Women general president. As I stood in the presence of a prophet of God and was given this sacred trust, I pledged that I would serve with all my heart, might, mind, and strength. Prior to this calling, I had a small plate inscribed with a motto

that read, “I can do hard things.” That little plate bearing that simple motto gave me courage. But now if I could change that motto, it would read, “In the strength of the Lord, I can do *all* things.”¹ It is on that strength that I rely today as I stand at this sacred pulpit.

Last April, two days after general conference, we held our first meeting as a newly sustained presidency. We hiked to

the top of Ensign Peak, and as we looked on the valley below, we saw the temple with the angel Moroni shining in the sun. For each of us, it was clear. The vision for our presidency was the temple. And our responsibility was also clear. We must “help prepare each young woman to be worthy to make and keep sacred covenants and receive the ordinances of the temple.”²

The temple is the reason for everything we do in the Church.³ The temple was the reason our pioneer ancestors left their established homes and came west. It was the reason they suffered privation and even death. Temple covenants were the reason that, although babies were buried along the way, those pioneers could sing:

Come, come, ye Saints,
No toil nor labor fear;
But with joy wend your way.⁴

Some lost everything but came into the valley with *everything*, really—temple ordinances, sacred covenants, and the promise of eternal life together as families.

A return to virtue

Just two days after the Saints arrived in the Salt Lake Valley, Brigham Young and his associates hiked Ensign Peak. Atop that peak they unfurled a banner—a yellow bandana tied to a walking stick, which symbolized an ensign or standard to the nations.⁵ The Saints were to be the light, the standard. Last April, atop Ensign Peak, we three women also unfurled a banner which we made from a walking stick and a gold Peruvian shawl. It was *our* ensign, *our* standard to the nations—*our* banner calling for a return to virtue.

Virtue is a prerequisite to entering the Lord’s holy temples and to receiving the Spirit’s guidance. Virtue “is a pattern of thought and behavior based on high moral standards.”⁶ It encompasses chastity and moral purity. Virtue begins in the heart and in the mind. It is nurtured in

the home. It is the accumulation of thousands of small decisions and actions.

Virtue is a word we don’t hear often in today’s society, but the Latin root word *virtus* means strength. Virtuous women and men possess a quiet dignity and inner strength. They are confident because they are worthy to receive and be guided by the Holy Ghost. President Monson has counseled:

“*You* be the one to make a stand for right, even if you stand alone. Have the moral courage to be a light for others to follow. There is no friendship more valuable than your own clear conscience, your own moral cleanliness—and what a glorious feeling it is to know that you stand in your appointed place clean and with the confidence that you are worthy to do so.”⁷

Deceptions that entice some from virtue

Could it be that we have been slowly desensitized into thinking that high moral standards are old-fashioned and not relevant or important in today’s society? As Elder Hales has just reminded us, Lehonti in the Book of Mormon was well positioned on the top of a mountain. He and those he led were “fixed in their minds with a determined resolution” that they would not come down from the mount. It took the deceitful Amalickiah only four tries, each one more bold than the previous, to get Lehonti to “come down off from the mount.”⁸ And then having embraced Amalickiah’s false promises, Lehonti was “poison[ed] by degrees”⁹ until he died—not just poisoned, but “by degrees.”

Could it be that this may be happening today? Could it be that first we tolerate, then accept, and eventually embrace the vice that surrounds us?¹⁰ Could it be that we have been deceived by false role models and persuasive media messages that cause us to forget our divine identity? Are we too being poisoned by degrees?

What could be more deceptive than to entice the youth of this noble generation to do nothing or to be busy ever-texting but never coming to a knowledge of the truths contained in a book that was written for you and your day by prophets of God—the Book of Mormon?

What could be more deceptive than to entice women, young and old, you and me, to be so involved in ourselves, our looks, our clothes, our body shape and size that we lose sight of our divine identity and our ability to change the world through our virtuous influence?

What could be more deceptive than to entice men—young and old, holding the holy priesthood of God—to view seductive pornography and thus focus on flesh instead of faith, to be consumers of vice rather than guardians of virtue?

How to begin a return to virtue

The Book of Mormon relates the story of 2,000 young heroes whose virtue and purity gave them the strength to defend their parents' covenants and their family's faith. Their virtue and commitment to be "true at all times" changed the world!¹¹ I truly believe that one virtuous young woman or young man, led by the Spirit, can change the world, but in order to do so, we must return to virtue. We must engage in strict training. As the marathon runner Juma Ikangaa said after winning the New York Marathon, "The will to win is nothing without the will to prepare."¹² Now is the time to prepare by exercising more self-discipline. Now is the time to become "more fit for the kingdom."¹³ Now is the time to set our course and focus on the finish. A return to virtue must begin individually in our hearts and in our homes.

What can each of us do to begin our return to virtue? The course and the training program will be unique to each of us. I have derived my personal training program from instructions found in the scriptures:

"Let virtue garnish thy thoughts unceasingly."¹⁴

"Cleave unto [your] covenants."¹⁵

"Stand . . . in holy places."¹⁶

"Lay aside the things of [the] world."¹⁷

"Believe that ye must repent."¹⁸

"Always remember him and keep his commandments."¹⁹

And "if there is anything virtuous, lovely, or of good report or praiseworthy, . . . seek after these things."²⁰

Now more than ever before, it is time to respond to Moroni's call to "awake, and arise" and to "lay hold upon every good gift, and touch not the evil gift, nor the unclean thing."²¹

The most powerful force for virtue

Recently I attended the blessing of our newest granddaughter. It was a holy sight to me as my husband and our sons, along with many other loved ones, encircled this little infant. She was so elegant all dressed in white—and it didn't hurt a bit that she was named after her two grandmothers! But the thing that touched me most was the blessing given by her father, our son Zach. He blessed little Annabel Elaine that she would understand her identity as a daughter of God, that she would follow the examples of her mother, grandmothers, and sister, and that she would find great joy as she lived a virtuous life and prepared to make and keep sacred temple covenants. In that sacred moment I prayed that *every* young woman might be encircled, strengthened, and protected by righteous priesthood power, not only at the time of birth and blessing but throughout life.

During the solemn assembly last conference when President Uchtdorf called for the sustaining of our new prophet and First Presidency, I watched the entire congregation of priesthood brethren arise and stand. I felt your strength and your priesthood power. You are the guardians

of virtue. Then I was overcome with emotion when President Uchtdorf said, “Will the young women please arise?” From my seat, I saw all of you arise and stand together. Today there could be no more powerful force for virtue in the world. You must never underestimate the power of your righteous influence.

I testify that a return to virtue is possible because of the Savior’s example and the “infinite virtue of His great atoning sacrifice.”²² I testify that we will be enabled and strengthened not only to do hard things but to do *all* things. Now is the time for each of us to arise and unfurl a banner to the world calling for a return to virtue. May we so live that we can be instruments in preparing the earth for His Second Coming, “that when he shall appear we shall be like him, . . . *purified* even as he is pure.”²³ In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

1. See Alma 20:4.
2. First Presidency letter, Sept. 25, 1996.
3. See Russell M. Nelson, in Conference Report, Apr. 2001, 40; or *Ensign*, May 2001, 32.
4. “Come, Come, Ye Saints,” *Hymns*, no. 30.
5. See Gordon B. Hinckley, in Conference Report, Oct. 1989, 68; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1989, 52; Boyd K. Packer, in Conference Report, Oct. 2006, 91; or *Ensign*, Nov. 2006, 85.
6. *Preach My Gospel* (2004), 118.
7. In Conference Report, Apr. 2008, 66; or *Ensign*, May 2008, 65.
8. See Alma 47:4–12.
9. Alma 47:18.
10. See Alexander Pope, *An Essay on Man*, epistle 2, lines 217–20.
11. Alma 53:20; see also Alma 56.
12. Juma Ikangaa, quoted in Michael Sandrock, *Running with the Legends: Training and Racing Insights from 21 Great Runners* (1996), 415.
13. “More Holiness Give Me,” *Hymns*, no. 131.
14. Doctrine and Covenants 121:45.
15. Doctrine and Covenants 25:13.
16. Doctrine and Covenants 45:32.
17. Doctrine and Covenants 25:10.
18. Mosiah 4:10.
19. Doctrine and Covenants 20:77.
20. Articles of Faith 1:13; see also Romans 8:16; 1 Corinthians 3:16; 1 Thessalonians 5:22; Jacob 4:6; Alma 37:36; Moroni 10:32.
21. Moroni 10:30–31.
22. “The Living Christ: The Testimony of the Apostles,” *Ensign*, Apr. 2000, 2.
23. Moroni 7:48; italics added.

The choir sang “I Feel My Savior’s Love.”

Elder M. Russell Ballard

The truth of God shall go forth

My brothers and sisters, on July 19th of this year the Sons of Utah Pioneers placed at This Is the Place Heritage Park in Salt Lake City a statue of the Prophet Joseph Smith and his successor, President Brigham Young. This statue, entitled *Eyes Westward*, shows these two great prophets with a map of the western territories.

Many people, including Latter-day Saints, forget that Joseph Smith was very much aware that the Church would eventually be relocated to the great American West. In August of 1842 he prophesied “that the Saints would continue to suffer much affliction and would be driven to the Rocky Mountains, many would apostatize, others would be put to death by our

persecutors or lose their lives in consequence of exposure or disease, and some [would] live to . . . build cities and see the Saints become a mighty people in the midst of the Rocky Mountains” (*History of the Church*, 5:85).

Even Joseph’s closest associates in those early years did not fully understand the trials that the Latter-day Saints would endure as the Church rolled forth from its small beginnings in the early 1800s. But Joseph Smith knew that no enemy then present or in the future would have sufficient power to frustrate or stop the purposes of God. We are all familiar with his prophetic words: “The Standard of Truth has been erected; no unhallowed hand can stop the work from progressing; persecutions may rage, mobs may combine, armies may assemble, calumny may defame, but the truth of God will go forth boldly, nobly, and independent, till it has penetrated every continent, visited every clime, swept every country, and sounded in every ear, till the purposes of God shall be accomplished, and the Great Jehovah shall say the work is done” (*History of the Church*, 4:540).

Nearly 18 decades have passed since the organization of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in 1830. We have had 178 years to observe the fulfillment of prophecy and to watch “the truth of God” as it goes “forth boldly, nobly, and independent.”

The Church’s beginnings

The Church began its first decade with only a few members. Despite intense opposition, 597 missionaries were called during the 1830s, and over 15,000 converts were baptized into the Church. The United States, Canada, and Great Britain were opened to the preaching of the gospel.

There were many converts during the 1840s while persecutions continued to rage against the Church and especially

against the Prophet Joseph. In the midst of these difficulties and despite the great challenges of travel, the restored gospel of Jesus Christ continued to cover more of the earth through the faithful service of 1,454 missionaries called during the 1840s, and Church membership grew to more than 48,000. On June 27, 1844, the persecution of Joseph Smith culminated when he and his brother Hyrum were killed by a mob in the Carthage Jail.

Settlement in the West, more expansion

Soon after the martyrdom and in fulfillment of Joseph’s vision, Brigham Young and the Church began preparations to move to the Rocky Mountains. Hardship, affliction, death, and apostasy were ever present. Still, the work moved forward. In the 1850s some 705 missionaries were called to serve in areas including Scandinavia, France, Italy, Switzerland, and Hawaii. Missionary work also began in such diverse parts of the world as India, Hong Kong, Thailand, Burma, South Africa, and the West Indies.

Among faithful converts from Scandinavia and Britain baptized during the decade of the 1850s were those who suffered and died, on land and on the seas, as they journeyed to join with the Saints here in the Rocky Mountains.

In 1875 the first seven missionaries were called to Mexico, and the work there flourished even amid revolution and other challenges. And it was just four years ago, in 2004, that the Church reached the milestone of one million members in Mexico.

The faith of the Saints was tested in every footstep as Brigham Young led them to build temples and establish more than 350 colonies in the West. By the time Brigham Young died in 1877, worldwide Church membership had grown to more than 115,000. Despite all of the persecution, the truth of God was indeed going forth boldly and nobly.

Time does not allow a detailed review of the growth of the Church during the next few decades. But it should be noted that during the 40-year period from 1890 to 1930, while the Church and its doctrine were still under public attack, Elder Reed Smoot was elected to the United States Congress and had to fight to be seated. A great deal was said of the Church and its teachings during that time—much of it hurtful and directed toward President Joseph F. Smith and other Church leaders. However, some newspaper articles began to speak of members of the Church as contributing citizens and good people.

Growth of the Church in South America

On September 3, 1925, President Heber J. Grant announced that the Church would begin missionary work in South America. Following the Lord's pattern for taking the restored gospel to all nations, a member of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles—my paternal grandfather, Elder Melvin J. Ballard—was sent, with others, to South America to dedicate the land for the preaching of the gospel.

On Christmas morning of 1925 in Argentina, Elder Ballard dedicated the South American countries and started missionary work. Before leaving the following July, he prophesied:

“The work of the Lord will grow slowly for a time here just as an oak grows slowly from an acorn. It will not shoot up in a day as does the sunflower that grows quickly and then dies. But thousands will join the Church here. It will be divided into more than one mission and will be one of the strongest in the Church. The work here is the smallest that it will ever be” (in Melvin R. Ballard, *Melvin J. Ballard: Crusader for Righteousness* [1966], 84).

Anyone familiar with the growth of the Church in South America knows the fulfillment of that prophecy. Today, Brazil alone has over one million members.

Growth from 1930 to 1970

During the four decades from 1930 to 1970, more than 106,000 missionaries were called to serve worldwide. Church membership increased fourfold, to over 2,800,000. More than one million new members were added just during the 1960s. By 1970 missionaries were serving in 43 nations and 9 territories. During this 40-year period, the South American nations of Chile, Brazil, Uruguay, Paraguay, Ecuador, Colombia, Peru, and Venezuela were opened to missionary work. In Central America, servants of the Lord unlocked the nations of Panama, Costa Rica, Guatemala, El Salvador, Honduras, and Nicaragua. In Asia, major new efforts began to bear fruit in Korea, Taiwan, Singapore, and the Philippines.

None of this was easy. Challenges, obstacles, and persecution accompanied every attempt to take “the truth of God” into every continent and country so that it could “[sound] in every ear.” Still, we moved forward in faith; challenges were met, and obstacles were overcome.

Continued unprecedented growth

President Spencer W. Kimball asked members of the Church to lengthen their stride in spreading the gospel and sharing gospel truth. He asked every stake in the world to increase the number of missionaries, and he led the Church into using media to help convey our message to hundreds of millions of people throughout the earth.

During his 12 years as President of the Church, nearly 200,000 missionaries served full-time missions. Worldwide Church membership almost doubled, and the number of stakes nearly tripled. Missionary work was opened or reopened in many countries, and the miracle of conversion was happening in many lands despite every adversarial attempt to thwart the Lord's work or discourage the Lord's workers.

A little more than two decades have passed since the end of President Kimball's mortal ministry. During that period of time we have experienced unprecedented prominence in the worldwide community of faith. Probably not coincidentally, we have also experienced unprecedented ideological attacks on our people, our history, and our doctrine through the media.

And yet the Church continues to grow. Membership has more than doubled again—from 5.9 million in 1985 to more than 13 million today. And last year the one millionth missionary to serve during this dispensation was called.

The work of God cannot be frustrated

Now, my brothers and sisters, my purpose in this brief review of Joseph's prophetic vision of the destiny of this Church and its literal fulfillment through the decades is to remind us of this simple truth:

"The works, and the designs, and the purposes of God cannot be frustrated, neither can they come to naught.

"For God doth not walk in crooked paths, . . . neither doth he vary from that which he hath said, therefore his paths are straight, and his course is one eternal round.

"Remember . . . that it is not the work of God that is frustrated, but the work of men" (D&C 3:1–3).

God has spoken through His prophet and announced to the world that "the Standard of Truth has been erected" and that "no unhallowed hand can stop the work from progressing." That is undeniably and indisputably true. We have seen it for ourselves, in decade after decade, from the time of the Prophet Joseph Smith to the time of President Thomas S. Monson. Persecutions have raged. Calumny and lies and misrepresentation have attempted to defame. But in every decade from the time of the Restoration forward, the truth of God has gone "forth boldly, nobly, and independent." The little Church

that started in 1830 with just a handful of members has now grown to more than 13 million Latter-day Saints in many different nations around the world, and we are well on our way to penetrating every continent, visiting every clime, sweeping every country, and sounding in every ear.

Continue to move the work forward

This is God's work, and God's work will not be frustrated. But there is still much to be done before the Great Jehovah can announce that the work is done. While we praise and honor those faithful Saints who have brought us to this point of public prominence, we cannot afford, my brothers and sisters, to be comfortable or content.

We are all needed to finish the work that was begun by those pioneering Saints more than 175 years ago and carried out through the subsequent decades by faithful Saints of every generation. We need to believe as they believed. We need to work as they worked. We need to serve as they served. And we need to overcome as they overcame.

Of course, our challenges are different today, but they are no less demanding. Instead of angry mobs, we face those who constantly try to defame. Instead of extreme exposure and hardship, we face alcohol and drug abuse, pornography, all kinds of filth, sleaze, greed, dishonesty, and spiritual apathy. Instead of families being uprooted and torn from their homes, we see the institution of the family, including the divine institution of marriage, under attack as groups and individuals seek to define away the prominent and divine role of the family in society.

This is not to suggest that our challenges today are more severe than the challenges faced by those who have gone before us. They are just different. The Lord isn't asking us to load up a handcart; He's asking us to fortify our faith. He isn't asking us to walk across a continent; He's

asking us to walk across the street to visit our neighbor. He isn't asking us to give all of our worldly possessions to build a temple; He's asking us to give of our means and our time despite the pressures of modern living to continue to build temples and then to attend regularly the temples already built. He isn't asking us to die a martyr's death; He's asking us to live a disciple's life.

This is a great time to live, brothers and sisters, and it is up to us to carry on the rich tradition of devoted commitment that has been the hallmark of previous generations of Latter-day Saints. This is not a time for the spiritually faint of heart. We cannot afford to be superficially righteous. Our testimonies must run deep, with spiritual roots firmly embedded in the rock of revelation. And we must continue to move the work forward as a covenanted, consecrated people, with faith in

every footstep, "till the purposes of God shall be accomplished, and the Great Jehovah shall say the work is done." That it may be so for us is my humble prayer in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

President Monson

This has been a glorious session of conference. We express our thanks to the Tabernacle Choir for the beautiful music they have provided this morning and to those who have spoken to us.

It will now be my pleasure to address you. Following my remarks, this session will conclude with the choir singing "The Morning Breaks." The benediction will then be offered by Elder Daniel L. Johnson of the Seventy. The concluding session of this conference will begin at 2:00 this afternoon.

President Thomas S. Monson

The constant of change

My dear brothers and sisters, I am humbled as I stand before you this morning. I ask for your faith and prayers in my behalf as I speak about those things which have been on my mind and which I have felt impressed to share with you.

I begin by mentioning one of the most inevitable aspects of our lives here upon the earth, and that is *change*. At one time or another we've all heard some form of the familiar adage: "Nothing is as constant as change."

Throughout our lives, we must deal with change. Some changes are welcome; some are not. There are changes in our lives which are sudden, such as the unexpected passing of a loved one, an unforeseen illness, the loss of a possession we treasure. But most of the changes take place subtly and slowly.

This conference marks 45 years since I was called to the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. As the junior member of the Twelve then, I looked up to 14 exceptional men, who were senior to me in the Twelve and the First Presidency. One by one, each of these men has returned home. When President Hinckley passed away eight months ago, I realized that I had become the senior Apostle. The changes over a period of 45 years that were incremental now seem monumental.

This coming week Sister Monson and I will celebrate our 60th wedding anniversary. As I look back to our beginnings, I realize just how much our lives have changed since then. Our beloved parents, who stood beside us as we commenced our journey together, have passed on. Our three children, who filled our lives so completely for many years, are grown and have

families of their own. Most of our grandchildren are grown, and we now have four great-grandchildren.

Day by day, minute by minute, second by second we went from where we were to where we are now. The lives of all of us, of course, go through similar alterations and changes. The difference between the changes in my life and the changes in yours is only in the details. Time never stands still; it must steadily march on, and with the marching come the changes.

Find joy in the journey

This is our one and only chance at mortal life—here and now. The longer we live, the greater is our realization that it is brief. Opportunities come, and then they are gone. I believe that among the greatest lessons we are to learn in this short sojourn upon the earth are lessons that help us distinguish between what is important and what is not. I plead with you not to let those most important things pass you by as you plan for that illusive and non-existent future when you will have time to do all that you want to do. Instead, find joy in the journey—now.

I am what my wife, Frances, calls a “show-a-holic.” I thoroughly enjoy many musicals, and one of my favorites was written by the American composer Meredith Willson and is entitled *The Music Man*. Professor Harold Hill, one of the principal characters in the show, voices a caution that I share with you. Says he, “You pile up enough tomorrows, and you’ll find you’ve collected a lot of empty yesterdays.”¹

Make the most of today

My brothers and sisters, there is no tomorrow to remember if we don’t do something today.

I’ve shared with you previously an example of this philosophy. I believe it bears repeating. Many years ago, Arthur Gordon wrote in a national magazine, and I quote:

“When I was around thirteen and my brother ten, Father had promised to take us to the circus. But at lunchtime there was a phone call; some urgent business required his attention downtown. We braced ourselves for disappointment. Then we heard him say [into the phone], ‘No, I won’t be down. It’ll have to wait.’

“When he came back to the table, Mother smiled. ‘The circus keeps coming back, you know,’ [she said.]

“‘I know,’ said Father. ‘But childhood doesn’t.’”²

If you have children who are grown and gone, in all likelihood you have occasionally felt pangs of loss and the recognition that you didn’t appreciate that time of life as much as you should have. Of course, there is no going back, but only forward. Rather than dwelling on the past, we should make the most of today, of the here and now, doing all we can to provide pleasant memories for the future.

If you are still in the process of raising children, be aware that the tiny fingerprints that show up on almost every newly cleaned surface, the toys scattered about the house, the piles and piles of laundry to be tackled will disappear all too soon and that you will—to your surprise—miss them profoundly.

Express love to friends and family

Stresses in our lives come regardless of our circumstances. We must deal with them the best we can. But we should not let them get in the way of what is most important—and what is most important almost always involves the people around us. Often we assume that they *must* know how much we love them. But we should never assume; we should let them know. Wrote William Shakespeare, “They do not love that do not show their love.”³ We will never regret the kind words spoken or the affection shown. Rather, our regrets will come if such things are omitted from

our relationships with those who mean the most to us.

Send that note to the friend you've been neglecting; give your child a hug; give your *parents* a hug; say "I love you" more; always express your thanks. Never let a problem to be solved become more important than a person to be loved. Friends move away, children grow up, and loved ones pass on. It's so easy to take others for granted—until that day when they're gone from our lives and we are left with feelings of "what if" and "if only." Said author Harriet Beecher Stowe: "The bitterest tears shed over graves are for words left unsaid and deeds left undone."⁴

In the 1960s during the Vietnam War, Church member Jay Hess, an airman, was shot down over North Vietnam. For two years his family had no idea whether he was dead or alive. His captors in Hanoi eventually allowed him to write home but limited his message to less than 25 words. What would you and I say to our families if we were in the same situation—not having seen them for over two years and not knowing if we would ever see them again? Wanting to provide something his family could recognize as having come from him and also wanting to give them valuable counsel, Brother Hess wrote—and I quote: "These things are important: temple marriage, mission, college. Press on, set goals, write history, take pictures twice a year."⁵

Let us relish life as we live it, find joy in the journey, and share our love with friends and family. One day each of us will run out of tomorrows.

In the book of John in the New Testament, chapter 13, verse 34, the Savior admonishes us, "As I have loved you, . . . love one another."

Be grateful for what we have

Some of you may be familiar with Thornton Wilder's classic drama *Our Town*. If you are, you will remember the

town of Grover's Corners, where the story takes place. In the play, Emily Webb dies in childbirth and we read of the lonely grief of her young husband, George, left with their four-year-old son. Emily does not wish to rest in peace; she wants to experience again the joys of her life. She is granted the privilege of returning to earth and reliving her 12th birthday. At first it is exciting to be young again, but the excitement wears off quickly. The day holds no joy now that Emily knows what is in store for the future. It is unbearably painful to realize how unaware she had been of the meaning and wonder of life while she was alive. Before returning to her resting place, Emily laments, "Do . . . human beings ever realize life while they live it—every, every minute?"

Our realization of what is most important in life goes hand in hand with gratitude for our blessings.

Said one well-known author: "Both abundance and lack [of abundance] exist simultaneously in our lives, as parallel realities. It is always our conscious choice which secret garden we will tend . . . when we choose not to focus on what is missing from our lives but are grateful for the abundance that's present—love, health, family, friends, work, the joys of nature, and personal pursuits that bring us [happiness]—the wasteland of illusion falls away and we experience heaven on earth."⁶

In the Doctrine and Covenants, section 88, verse 33, we are told: "For what doth it profit a man if a gift is bestowed upon him, and he receive not the gift? Behold, he rejoices not in that which is given unto him, neither rejoices in him who is the giver of the gift."

The ancient Roman philosopher Horace admonished, "Whatever hour God has blessed you with, take it with grateful hand, nor postpone your joys from year to year, so that in whatever place you have been, you may say that you have lived happily."

Borghild Dahl's attitude of thankfulness

Many years ago I was touched by the story of Borghild Dahl. She was born in Minnesota in 1890 of Norwegian parents and from her early years suffered severely impaired vision. She had a tremendous desire to participate in everyday life despite her handicap and, through sheer determination, succeeded in nearly everything she undertook. Against the advice of educators, who felt her handicap was too great, she attended college, receiving her bachelor of arts degree from the University of Minnesota. She later studied at Columbia University and the University of Oslo. She eventually became the principal of eight schools in western Minnesota and North Dakota.

She wrote the following in one of the 17 books she authored: "I had only one eye, and it was so covered with dense scars that I had to do all my seeing through one small opening in the left of the eye. I could see a book only by holding it up close to my face and by straining my one eye as hard as I could to the left."⁷

Miraculously, in 1943—when she was over 50 years old—a revolutionary procedure was developed which finally restored to her much of the sight she had been without for so long. A new and exciting world opened up before her. She took great pleasure in the small things most of us take for granted, such as watching a bird in flight, noticing the light reflected in the bubbles of her dishwater, or observing the phases of the moon each night. She closed one of her books with these words: "Dear . . . Father in heaven, I thank Thee. I thank Thee."⁸

Borghild Dahl, both before and after her sight was restored, was filled with gratitude for her blessings.

In 1982, two years before she died, at the age of 92 her last book was published. Its title: *Happy All My Life*. Her attitude

of thankfulness enabled her to appreciate her blessings and to live a full and rich life despite her challenges.

"In every thing give thanks"

In 1 Thessalonians in the New Testament, chapter 5, verse 18, we are told by the Apostle Paul, "In every thing give thanks: for this is the will of God."

Recall with me the account of the 10 lepers:

"And as [Jesus] entered into a certain village, there met him ten men that were lepers, which stood afar off:

"And they lifted up their voices, and said, Jesus, Master, have mercy on us.

"And when he saw them, he said unto them, Go shew yourselves unto the priests. And it came to pass, that, as they went, they were cleansed.

"And one of them, when he saw that he was healed, turned back, and with a loud voice glorified God,

"And fell down on his face at his feet, giving him thanks: and he was a Samaritan.

"And Jesus answering said, Were there not ten cleansed? but where are the nine?

"There are not found that returned to give glory to God, save this stranger."⁹

Said the Lord in a revelation given through the Prophet Joseph Smith, "In nothing doth man offend God, or against none is his wrath kindled, save those who confess not his hand in all things."¹⁰ May we be found among those who give our thanks to our Heavenly Father. If ingratitude be numbered among the serious sins, then gratitude takes its place among the noblest of virtues.

Despite the changes which come into our lives and with gratitude in our hearts, may we fill our days—as much as we can—with those things which matter most. May we cherish those we hold dear and express our love to them in word and in deed.

Gratitude for our Savior

In closing, I pray that all of us will reflect gratitude for our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. His glorious gospel provides answers to life's greatest questions: Where did we come from? Why are we here? Where does my spirit go when I die?

He taught us how to pray. He taught us how to serve. He taught us how to live. His life is a legacy of love. The sick He healed; the downtrodden He lifted; the sinner He saved.

The time came when He stood alone. Some Apostles doubted; one betrayed Him. The Roman soldiers pierced His side. The angry mob took His life. There yet rings from Golgotha's hill His compassionate words, "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do."¹¹

Earlier, perhaps perceiving the culmination of His earthly mission, He spoke the lament, "Foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head."¹² "No room in the inn"¹³ was not a singular expression of rejection—just the first. Yet He invites you and me to receive Him. "Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me."¹⁴

Who was this Man of sorrows, acquainted with grief? Who is the King of glory, this Lord of hosts? He is our Master. He is our Savior. He is the Son of God. He is the Author of our Salvation. He beckons, "Follow me."¹⁵ He instructs, "Go, and do thou likewise."¹⁶ He pleads, "Keep my commandments."¹⁷

Let us follow Him. Let us emulate His example. Let us obey His word. By so

doing, we give to Him the divine gift of gratitude.

Brothers and sisters, my sincere prayer is that we may adapt to the changes in our lives, that we may realize what is most important, that we may express our gratitude always and thus find joy in the journey. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

1. Meredith Willson and Franklin Lacey, *The Music Man* (1957).
2. Arthur Gordon, *A Touch of Wonder* (1974), 77–78.
3. William Shakespeare, *Two Gentlemen of Verona*, act 1, scene 2, line 31.
4. Harriet Beecher Stowe, in Gorton Carruth and Eugene Erlich, comp., *The Harper Book of American Quotations* (1988), 173.
5. Personal correspondence.
6. Sarah Ban Breathnach, in John Cook, comp., *The Book of Positive Quotations*, 2nd ed. (2007), 342.
7. Borghild Dahl, *I Wanted to See* (1944), 1.
8. *I Wanted to See*, 210.
9. Luke 17:12–18.
10. Doctrine and Covenants 59:21.
11. Luke 23:34.
12. Matthew 8:20.
13. See Luke 2:7.
14. Revelation 3:20.
15. Mark 2:14.
16. Luke 10:37.
17. Doctrine and Covenants 11:6.

The choir sang "The Morning Breaks."

Elder Daniel L. Johnson offered the benediction.

SUNDAY AFTERNOON SESSION

The fifth session of the 178th Semiannual General Conference convened in the Conference Center at 2:00 p.m. on Sunday, October 5, 2008. President Dieter F. Uchtdorf conducted this session.

The Tabernacle Choir provided the music for this session. Mack Wilberg and Ed Thompson directed the choir. Bonnie Goodliffe and Linda Margetts were the organists.

President Uchtdorf made the following remarks as the meeting began.

President Dieter F. Uchtdorf

We welcome you this afternoon to the fifth and concluding session of the 178th Semiannual General Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. President Thomas S. Monson, who presides at this conference, has asked that I, Brother Uchtdorf, conduct this session.

We extend our greetings and blessings to members of the Church and many friends everywhere who are participating in these conference proceedings.

The music for this session will be provided by the Tabernacle Choir, under the

direction of Mack Wilberg and Ed Thompson, with Bonnie Goodliffe and Linda Margetts at the organ.

The choir will open these services by singing “Guide Us, O Thou Great Jehovah.” The invocation will then be offered by Elder Paul B. Pieper of the Seventy.

The choir sang “Guide Us, O Thou Great Jehovah.”

Elder Paul B. Pieper offered the invocation.

The choir sang “Faith in Every Footstep.”

President Uchtdorf

The choir has sung “Faith in Every Footstep.”

We will now be pleased to hear from President Boyd K. Packer, President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, after which we shall hear from Elder Russell M. Nelson of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. He will be followed by Brother William D. Oswald, second counselor in the Sunday School general presidency.

President Boyd K. Packer

It is my purpose to show that in troubled times, the Lord has always prepared a safe way ahead. We live in those “perilous times” which the Apostle Paul prophesied would come in the last days.¹ If we are to be safe individually, as families, and secure as a church, it will be through “obedience to the laws and ordinances of the Gospel.”²

Persecutions of the early Saints

On July 24, 1849, the Saints had been in the valley two years to the day. They

finally were free from years of mobbing and persecution. That called for a great celebration.

Just a few years earlier under dreadful conditions, the Prophet Joseph Smith suffered in Liberty Jail for months while the mobs drove the Saints from their homes. The words *liberty* and *jail* do not fit together very well. Joseph called out:

“O God, where art thou? And where is the pavilion that covereth thy hiding place?”

“How long shall thy hand be stayed, and thine eye, yea thy pure eye, behold

from the eternal heavens the wrongs of thy people and of thy servants, and thine ear be penetrated with their cries?"³

The Prophet Joseph Smith had earlier sought direction, and the Lord told the Saints to seek redress from the judges, the governor, and then the president.⁴

Their appeals to the judges failed. During his life, Joseph Smith was summoned to court over 200 times on all kinds of trumped-up charges. He was never convicted.

When they sought redress from Governor Boggs of Missouri, he issued a proclamation: "The Mormons must be treated as enemies and *must be exterminated* or driven from the state, if necessary for the public good."⁵ That unleashed untold brutality and wickedness.

They appealed to President Martin Van Buren of the United States, who told them, "Your cause is just, but I can do nothing for you."⁶

I will read the final paragraphs of their third petition addressed to the Congress of the United States:

"The afflictions of your memorialists have already been overwhelming, too much for humanity, too much for American citizens to endure without complaint. We have groaned under the iron hand of tyranny and oppression these many years. We have been robbed of our property to the amount of two millions of dollars. We have been hunted as the wild beasts of the forest. We have seen our aged fathers who fought in the Revolution, and our innocent children, alike slaughtered by our persecutors. We have seen the fair daughters of American citizens insulted and abused in the most inhuman manner, and finally, we have seen fifteen thousand souls, men, women, and children, driven by force of arms, during the severities of winter, from their sacred homes and firesides, to a land of strangers, penniless and unprotected. Under all these afflicting circumstances, we imploringly stretch forth our hands towards the highest councils of our nation,

and humbly appeal to the illustrious Senators and Representatives of a great and free people for redress and protection.

"Hear! O hear the petitioning voice of many thousands of American citizens who now groan in exile . . . ! Hear! O hear the weeping and bitter lamentations of widows and orphans, whose husbands and fathers have been cruelly martyred in the land where the proud eagle . . . floats! Let it not be recorded in the archives of the nations, that . . . exiles sought protection and redress at your hands, but sought it in vain. It is in your power to save us, our wives, and our children, from a repetition of the bloodthirsty scenes of Missouri, and thus greatly relieve the fears of a persecuted and injured people, and your petitioners will ever pray."⁷

There was no pity, and they were turned away.

In 1844, while under the avowed protection of Governor Thomas Ford of Illinois, the Prophet Joseph Smith and his brother Hyrum were shot to death in Carthage Jail. Words cannot express the brutality and suffering the Saints had endured.

A grand patriotic celebration

Now on this 24th of July in 1849, free at last from the mobbings, they planned to celebrate.⁸

Everything the Saints owned would come across a thousand miles of desert by handcart or covered wagon. It would be 20 more years before the railroad came as far as Salt Lake City. With almost nothing to work with, they determined that the celebration would be a grand expression of their feelings.

They built a bowery on Temple Square. They erected a flagpole 104 feet tall. They made an enormous national flag 65 feet in length and unfurled it at the top of this liberty pole.

It may seem puzzling, incredible almost beyond belief, that for the theme of

this first celebration they chose patriotism and loyalty to that same government which had rejected and failed to assist them. What could they have been thinking of? If you can understand why, you will understand the power of the teachings of Christ.

Their brass band played as President Brigham Young led a grand procession to Temple Square. He was followed by the Twelve Apostles and the Seventy.

Then followed 24 young men dressed in white pants; black coats; white scarves on their right shoulders; coronets, or crowns, on their heads; and a sheathed sword at their left sides. In their right hand, of all things, each carried a copy of the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution of the United States. The Declaration of Independence was read by one of those young men.

Next came 24 young women dressed in white, with blue scarves on their right shoulders and white roses on their heads. Each carried a Bible and a Book of Mormon.

Almost but not quite as amazing as their choice of patriotism for a theme was what came next: 24 aged sires (as they were called) led by patriarch Isaac Morley. They were known as the Silver Greys—all 60 years of age or older. Each carried a staff painted red with white ribbon floating at the top. One carried the Stars and Stripes. These men were a symbol of the priesthood, which was “from the beginning before the world was”⁹ and had been restored in this dispensation.

Law-abiding, worthy citizens

The Saints knew that the Lord had told them to be “subject to kings, presidents, rulers, and magistrates, in obeying, honoring, and sustaining the law.”¹⁰ That commandment, revealed then, is true now of our members in every nation. We are to be law-abiding, worthy citizens.

The Lord told them, “I established the Constitution of this land, by the hands of wise men whom I raised up unto this very purpose.”¹¹

And in another verse, the Lord told them that “it is not right that any man should be in bondage one to another.”¹² They were therefore antislavery. This was a very sore spot with the settlers in Missouri.

And so on that day of celebration in 1849, “Elder Phineas Richards came forward in behalf of the twenty-four aged sires, and read their loyal and patriotic address.”¹³ He spoke of the need for them to teach patriotism to their children and to love and honor freedom. After he briefly recited the perils they had come through, he said:

“Brethren and friends, we who have lived to threescore years, have beheld the government of the United States in its glory, and know that the outrageous cruelties we have suffered proceeded from a corrupted and degenerate administration, while the pure principles of our boasted Constitution remain unchanged. . . .

“. . . As we have inherited the spirit of liberty and the fire of patriotism from our fathers, so let them descend [unchanged] to our posterity.”¹⁴

Followers of Christ

One would think that, compelled by force of human nature, the Saints would seek revenge, but something much stronger than human nature prevailed.

The Apostle Paul explained:

“The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned. . . .

“. . . We have the mind of Christ.”¹⁵

That Spirit defined those early members of the Church as followers of Christ.

If you can understand a people so long-suffering, so tolerant, so forgiving,

so Christian after what they had suffered, you will have unlocked the key to what a Latter-day Saint is. Rather than being consumed with revenge, they were anchored to revelation. Their course was set by the teachings still found today in the Old and the New Testaments, the Book of Mormon, the Doctrine and Covenants, and the Pearl of Great Price.

Living the gospel in perilous times

If you can understand why they would celebrate as they did, you can understand why we have faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, in the principles of the gospel.

The Book of Mormon teaches, “We talk of Christ, we rejoice in Christ, we preach of Christ, we prophesy of Christ, and we write according to our prophecies, that our children may know to what source they may look for a remission of their sins.”¹⁶

And so today in these strangely perilous times, in the true Church of Jesus Christ¹⁷ we teach and live the principles of His gospel.

Three things about that 1849 commemoration were both symbolic and prophetic: first, that the young men carried the Constitution and the Declaration of Independence; next, that each young woman carried the Bible and the Book of Mormon; and finally, that the old men—the Silver Greys—were honored in the parade.

After the program they had a feast at makeshift tables. Several hundred gold-rush travelers and 60 Indians were invited to join them.

Then they went back to work.

Remaining true during the Utah War

President Young had said, “If the people of the United States will let us alone for ten years we will ask no odds of them.”¹⁸

Eight years to the day after the 1849 celebration, the Saints were in Big Cottonwood Canyon to celebrate another 24th of

July. Four horsemen rode in to report that an army 2,500 soldiers strong was on the plains. The army of the United States, commanded by Colonel Albert Sidney Johnston, was ordered by President James Buchanan to crush a nonexistent Mormon rebellion.

The Saints broke camp and headed for home to prepare their defenses. Rather than flee, this time President Young declared, “We have transgressed no law, and we have no occasion to do so, neither do we intend to; but as for any nation’s coming to destroy this people, God Almighty being my helper, they cannot come here.”¹⁹

My great-grandparents buried a child on the trail from Far West, when they were driven to Nauvoo, and another at Winter Quarters, when they were driven west.

Another great-grandmother, a teenager, was pushing a handcart along the south banks of the Platte River. They sang:

We’ll find the place which God for us
prepared,
Far away in the West,
Where none shall come to hurt or
make afraid;
There the Saints will be blessed.²⁰

Across the river they could see the sun glinting on the weapons of the soldiers of the army.²¹

In St. Louis my great-grandmother bought a little enameled pin of the American flag. She wore it on her dress for the rest of her life.

Neither mobbings nor the army could turn the Saints aside from what they knew to be true. A settlement was negotiated, and the Utah War (later called Buchanan’s Blunder) was over.

Guided by revelation, led by a prophet

We are guided by the same revelations and are led by a prophet. When the Prophet Joseph Smith died, another took his place. The order of succession continues today.

Six months ago at general conference, Thomas S. Monson was sustained as the 16th President of the Church, just five months before his 81st birthday. He succeeded President Gordon B. Hinckley, who died in his 98th year.

The senior leaders of the Church will virtually always be seasoned by decades of preparation.

President Monson is ideally suited for the challenges of our day. He is sustained by two counselors and the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles—all prophets, seers, and revelators.

That same Lucifer who was cast out of our Father's presence is still at work. He, with the angels who followed him, will trouble the work of the Lord and destroy it if he can.

But we will stay on course. We will anchor ourselves as families and as a church to these principles and ordinances. Whatever tests lie ahead, and they will be many, we must remain faithful and true.

I bear witness of God the Father and His Son, Jesus Christ, that They live, that Thomas S. Monson is called of God by prophecy.

"The Standard of Truth has been erected; no unhallowed hand can stop the work from progressing."²² Today the sun

never sets on congregations of the Latter-day Saints. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

1. See 2 Timothy 3:1–7.
2. Articles of Faith 1:3.
3. Doctrine and Covenants 121:1–2.
4. See Doctrine and Covenants 101:86–88.
5. *History of the Church*, 3:175.
6. Martin Van Buren, quoted in Eliza R. Snow Smith, *Biography and Family Record of Lorenzo Snow* (1884), 77.
7. Quoted in *Biography*, 152–53.
8. See *Biography*, 95–107.
9. Doctrine and Covenants 76:13.
10. Articles of Faith 1:12.
11. Doctrine and Covenants 101:80.
12. Doctrine and Covenants 101:79.
13. *Biography*, 100.
14. Phineas Richards, in *Biography*, 102–4.
15. 1 Corinthians 2:14, 16.
16. 2 Nephi 25:26.
17. See Doctrine and Covenants 1:30.
18. Brigham Young, *Deseret News*, Sept. 23, 1857, 228.
19. *Deseret News*, Sept. 23, 1857, 228.
20. "Come, Come, Ye Saints," *Hymns*, no. 30.
21. See "By Handcart to Utah: The Account of C. C. A. Christensen," *Nebraska History*, winter 1985, 342.
22. *History of the Church*, 4:540.

Elder Russell M. Nelson

Patterns of the shopper

My beloved brethren and sisters, I am deeply grateful for each of you. Together we feel a profound sense of gratitude for the gospel of Jesus Christ. In this world abounding with misery, we are truly thankful for God's "great plan of happiness."¹ His plan declares that men and women are "that they might have joy."² That joy comes when we choose to live in harmony with God's eternal plan.

The importance of choice may be illustrated by a homespun concept that

came to mind one day when I was shopping in a large retail store. I call it "patterns of the shopper." As shopping is part of our daily life, these patterns may be familiar.

Wise shoppers study their options thoroughly before they make a selection. They focus primarily on the quality and durability of a desired product. They want the very best. In contrast, some shoppers look for bargains, and others may splurge, only to learn later—much to their dismay—that their choice did not endure well.

And sadly, there are those rare individuals who cast aside their personal integrity and steal what they want. We call them shoplifters.

The patterns of the shopper may be applied to the topic of marriage. A couple in love can choose a marriage of the highest quality or a lesser type that will not endure. Or they can choose neither and brazenly steal what they want as “marital shoplifters.”

The virtue of a temple marriage

The subject of marriage is debated across the world, where various arrangements exist for conjugal living. My purpose in speaking out on this topic is to declare, as an Apostle of the Lord,³ that marriage between a man and a woman is sacred—it is ordained of God.⁴ I also assert the virtue of a temple marriage. It is the highest and most enduring type of marriage that our Creator can offer to His children.

While salvation is an individual matter, exaltation is a family matter.⁵ Only those who are married in the temple and whose marriage is sealed by the Holy Spirit of Promise will continue as spouses after death⁶ and receive the highest degree of celestial glory, or exaltation. A temple marriage is also called a celestial marriage. Within the celestial glory are three levels. To obtain the highest, a husband and wife must be sealed for time and all eternity and keep their covenants made in a holy temple.⁷

The noblest yearning of the human heart is for a marriage that can endure beyond death. Fidelity to a temple marriage does that. It allows families to be together forever.

This goal is glorious. All Church activities, advancements, quorums, and classes are means to the end of an exalted family.⁸

To make this goal possible, our Heavenly Father has restored priesthood keys

in this dispensation so that essential ordinances in His plan can be performed by proper authority. Heavenly messengers—including John the Baptist;⁹ Peter, James, and John;¹⁰ Moses, Elias, and Elijah¹¹—have participated in that restoration.¹²

Proclamation on the family

Knowledge of this revealed truth is spreading across the earth.¹³ We, as the Lord’s prophets and apostles, again proclaim to the world that “the family is central to the Creator’s plan for the eternal destiny of His children.”¹⁴

We further proclaim that “all human beings—male and female—are created in the image of God. Each is a beloved spirit son or daughter of heavenly parents, and, as such, each has a divine nature and destiny. Gender is an essential characteristic of individual premortal, mortal, and eternal identity and purpose.

“In the premortal realm, spirit sons and daughters knew and worshipped God as their Eternal Father and accepted His plan by which His children could obtain a physical body and gain earthly experience to progress toward perfection and ultimately realize their divine destiny as heirs of eternal life. [Heavenly Father’s great] plan of happiness enables family relationships to be perpetuated beyond the grave. Sacred ordinances and covenants available in holy temples make it possible for individuals to return to the presence of God and for families to be united eternally.”¹⁵

That proclamation on the family helps us realize that celestial marriage brings greater possibilities for happiness than does any other relationship.¹⁶ The earth was created and this Church was restored so that families could be formed, sealed, and exalted eternally.¹⁷

Temple marriage, a partnership with God

Scriptures declare that “it is lawful that [a man] should have one wife, and

they twain shall be one flesh, and all this that the earth might answer the end of its creation.”¹⁸ Another affirms that “the man [is not] without the woman, neither the woman without the man, in the Lord.”¹⁹ Thus, marriage is not only an exalting principle of the gospel; it is a divine commandment.

Our Heavenly Father declared, “This is my work and my glory—to bring to pass the immortality and eternal life of man.”²⁰ The Atonement of His Beloved Son enabled both of these objectives to be realized. Because of the Atonement, immortality—or resurrection from the dead—became a reality for all.²¹ And because of the Atonement, eternal life—which is living forever in God’s presence, the “greatest of all the gifts of God”²²—became a possibility. To qualify for eternal life, we must make an eternal and everlasting covenant with our Heavenly Father.²³ This means that a temple marriage is not only between husband and wife; it embraces a partnership with God.²⁴

Becoming an eternal family

The family proclamation also reminds us that “husband and wife have a solemn responsibility to love and care for each other.”²⁵ Children born of that union are “an heritage of the Lord.”²⁶ When a family is sealed in the temple, that family may become as eternal as the kingdom of God itself.²⁷

Such a reward requires more than a hopeful wish. On occasion I read in a newspaper obituary of an expectation that a recent death has reunited that person with a deceased spouse, when, in fact, they did *not* choose the eternal option. Instead, they opted for a marriage that was valid only as long as they both should live. Heavenly Father had offered them a supernal gift, but they refused it. And in rejecting the gift, they rejected the Giver of the gift.²⁸

One strong sentence of scripture clearly distinguishes between a hopeful wish and eternal truth:

“All covenants, contracts, . . . obligations, oaths, vows, . . . or expectations, that are *not* made and entered into and sealed by the Holy Spirit of promise, of him who is anointed, both as well for time and for all eternity, . . . are of *no* efficacy, virtue, or force in and after the resurrection from the dead; for all contracts that are *not* made unto this end have an end when men are dead.”²⁹

These truths are absolute. Members of this Church invite all people to learn them and to qualify for eternal life.³⁰ We invite all to gain faith in God the Eternal Father and in His Son, Jesus Christ, to repent, to receive the Holy Ghost, to obtain the blessings of the temple, to make and keep sacred covenants, and to endure to the end.

No blessing will be withheld

Mercifully, God’s great plan of happiness and its eternal blessings can be extended to those who did not have the opportunity to hear the gospel in mortality. Temple ordinances can be done vicariously for them.³¹

But what of the many mature members of the Church who are not married? Through no failing of their own, they deal with the trials of life alone. Be we all reminded that, in the Lord’s own way and time, no blessings will be withheld from His faithful Saints.³² The Lord will judge and reward each individual according to heartfelt desire as well as deed.³³

Marital happiness requires earnest effort

Meanwhile, mortal misunderstandings can make mischief in a marriage. In fact, each marriage starts with two built-in handicaps. It involves two imperfect people. Happiness can come to them only

through their earnest effort. Just as harmony comes from an orchestra only when its members make a concerted effort, so harmony in marriage also requires a concerted effort. That effort will succeed if each partner will minimize personal demands and maximize actions of loving selflessness.

President Thomas S. Monson has said: “To find real happiness, we must seek for it in a focus outside ourselves. No one has learned the meaning of living until he has surrendered his ego to the service of his fellow man. Service to others is akin to duty—the fulfillment of which brings true joy.”³⁴

Harmony in marriage comes only when one esteems the welfare of his or her spouse among the highest of priorities. When that really happens, a celestial marriage becomes a reality, bringing great joy in this life and in the life to come.

Celestial marriage—the best choice

God’s plan of happiness allows us to choose for ourselves. As with the patterns of the shopper, we may choose celestial marriage or lesser alternatives.³⁵ Some marital options are cheap, some are costly, and some are cunningly crafted by the adversary. Beware of his options; they always breed misery!³⁶

The best choice is a celestial marriage. Thankfully, if a lesser choice has previously been made, a choice can now be made to upgrade it to the best choice. That requires a mighty change of heart³⁷ and a permanent personal upgrade.³⁸ Blessings so derived are worth all efforts made.³⁹

The full realization of the blessings of a temple marriage is almost beyond our mortal comprehension. Such a marriage will continue to grow in the celestial realm. There we can become perfected.⁴⁰ As Jesus ultimately received the fulness of the glory of the Father,⁴¹ so we may “come unto the Father . . . and in due time receive of his fulness.”⁴²

Celestial marriage is a pivotal part of preparation for eternal life. It requires one to be married to the right person, in the right place, by the right authority, and to obey that sacred covenant faithfully.⁴³ Then one may be assured of exaltation in the celestial kingdom of God. I so testify in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

1. Alma 42:8. It is also known as the “plan of . . . God” (see 2 Nephi 9:13; Alma 34:9), the “plan of redemption” (see Jacob 6:8; Alma 12:26, 30, 32–33; 29:2; 42:13), the “plan of salvation” (see Alma 24:14; 42:5), and the “plan of mercy” (see Alma 42:15, 31).
2. 2 Nephi 2:25.
3. See Doctrine and Covenants 107:35.
4. See Doctrine and Covenants 49:15–17.
5. See Russell M. Nelson, in Conference Report, Apr. 2008, 5–8; or *Ensign*, May 2008, 7–10.
6. See Doctrine and Covenants 76:53; 132:7.
7. See Doctrine and Covenants 131:1–3.
8. One example of this objective is the scriptural declaration that “thy duty is unto the church forever, and this *because* of thy family” (D&C 23:3; italics added).
9. See Doctrine and Covenants 13.
10. See Matthew 16:18–19; Doctrine and Covenants 27:12–13; Joseph Smith—History 1:72.
11. See Doctrine and Covenants 110:11–16.
12. See Doctrine and Covenants 128:8, 18; 132:45–46.
13. See 2 Nephi 10:2; 30:8.
14. “The Family: A Proclamation to the World,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1995, 102.
15. *Ensign*, Nov. 1995, 102.
16. Previously I have stated that “marriage is the foundry for social order, the fountain of virtue, and the foundation for eternal exaltation” (in Conference Report, Apr. 2006, 37; or *Ensign*, May 2006, 36).
17. Whenever scriptures warn that the “earth would be utterly wasted,” the warning is connected to the need for priesthood authority to seal families together in holy temples (see D&C 2:1–3; 138:48; Joseph Smith—History 1:38–39).

18. Doctrine and Covenants 49:16; see also Genesis 2:24; Matthew 19:5; Mark 10:7–9; Doctrine and Covenants 42:22; Moses 3:24; Abraham 5:18.
19. 1 Corinthians 11:11.
20. Moses 1:39.
21. See 2 Nephi 9:22; Alma 12:8; 33:22; Helaman 14:17; Mormon 9:13; Moses 7:62; Joseph Smith Translation, Genesis 7:69.
22. Doctrine and Covenants 14:7.
23. See Doctrine and Covenants 132:19.
24. See Matthew 19:6.
25. *Ensign*, Nov. 1995, 102.
26. Psalm 127:3.
27. See Doctrine and Covenants 132:19–20.
28. See Doctrine and Covenants 88:33.
29. Doctrine and Covenants 132:7; italics added.
30. Jesus taught this concept to the people of ancient America (see 3 Nephi 27:16–20). See also 2 Nephi 33:4; Doctrine and Covenants 42:61; Joseph Smith Translation, 1 John 5:13.
31. See Doctrine and Covenants 128:1–18; 137:7–8.
32. See Joseph Fielding Smith, *Doctrines of Salvation*, comp. Bruce R. McConkie, 3 vols. (1954–56), 2:76–77.
33. See Alma 41:3; Doctrine and Covenants 137:9.
34. “Messages of Inspiration from President Monson,” *Church News*, July 5, 2008, 2.
35. See 2 Nephi 2:27; Jacob 6:8.
36. Satan wants us to be miserable, as he is (see Revelation 12:9; 2 Nephi 2:18; D&C 10:22–27; Moses 4:6).
37. See Alma 5:12–14. Such a mighty change includes repentance, forgiveness, and a renewed determination to “come unto Christ, and be perfected in him” (Moroni 10:32).
38. “The first principles and ordinances of the Gospel are: first, Faith in the Lord Jesus Christ; second, Repentance; third, Baptism by immersion for the remission of sins; fourth, Laying on of hands for the gift of the Holy Ghost” (Articles of Faith 1:4). Repentance requires a complete change for the better—a total personal upgrade.
39. See Doctrine and Covenants 93:1.
40. See Moroni 10:32.
41. See Doctrine and Covenants 93:13–14.
42. Doctrine and Covenants 93:19; see also Doctrine and Covenants 66:2; 132:5–6.
43. See Bruce R. McConkie, *Mormon Doctrine*, 2nd ed. (1966), 118.

William D. Oswald

Learning to jump the rope

Recently Sister Oswald and I decided to teach our five-year-old twin granddaughters how to jump the rope. Jumping the rope is a children’s game in which participants jump over a rope as it passes under their feet and then over their heads. After receiving some simple instructions, both girls tried but failed on several attempts.

Just as we were ready to give up, two older neighbor children walked by, and we enlisted their help. Both of the neighbor girls were experienced rope jumpers and

were able to show our granddaughters how to jump the rope. As the neighbor girls jumped the rope, I noticed that they sang a song that helped them jump to the rhythm of the swinging rope.

Once our granddaughters understood the principles of rope jumping and were shown how to jump the rope, the rest of the lesson was easy. With a little practice, both of the twins were well on their way to mastering the fundamentals of rope jumping.

During the rope-jumping lesson, another granddaughter, only three years old, was sitting quietly on the lawn observing.

When someone asked her if she wanted to try to jump the rope, she nodded, came forward, and stood next to the rope. As we turned the rope, to our great surprise she jumped just as she had seen her sisters do. She jumped once, then twice, and then again and again, repeating aloud the same song the older children had sung.

Learning to be effective gospel teachers

All three granddaughters observed that there was an art to jumping the rope. It was a simple thing that all of them could do after learning a few basic principles and being shown how. So it is with gospel teaching. When we learn a few fundamental principles about teaching and are shown how to teach, all of us can do it.

President Boyd K. Packer often reminds us that “all of us—leaders, teachers, missionaries, and parents—have a lifelong challenge from the Lord to both teach and learn the doctrines of the gospel as they have been revealed to us.”¹ As simply stated by Elder L. Tom Perry, “Every position in the Church requires an effective teacher.”²

Since every member is a teacher and “teaching is the center of all that we do,”³ we all have a sacred responsibility to learn some basic principles of teaching. There are many principles of teaching and learning, and it is not enough for us just to read about them. First, we need to *understand* these basic principles, and second, we need to be *shown* how they are used by successful teachers. This can be done by carefully watching able teachers in our wards and branches and by reviewing the worldwide leadership training meeting on teaching and learning found on the Church Web site or in Church magazines.⁴

The basic principles that apply to learning and teaching the gospel are found in the scriptures. They are also discussed in an excellent but often neglected teaching resource entitled *Teaching, No Greater Call*.⁵

Scriptural examples of successful teachers

When we look for a model of the ideal teacher who can show us how to teach the gospel, we are inescapably drawn to Jesus of Nazareth. His disciples called him “Rabboni; which is to say, Master” or “Teacher.”⁶ He was and is the Master Teacher.

Jesus differed from other teachers of His day in that He taught “as one having authority.”⁷ This authority to teach and minister came from His Heavenly Father, for “God anointed Jesus . . . with the Holy Ghost and with power . . . ; for God was with him.”⁸

Following this pattern, Jesus was taught by His Heavenly Father, as recorded by John. Jesus said, “I do nothing of myself; but as my Father hath taught me.”⁹ “The Son can do nothing of himself, but what he seeth the Father do. . . . For the Father loveth the Son, and sheweth him all things that himself doeth.”¹⁰

Throughout the scriptures we can find additional examples of successful gospel teachers who changed the lives and saved the souls of those they taught. From the Book of Mormon, for example, Nephi,¹¹ Alma,¹² and the sons of Mosiah¹³ readily come to mind. Notice the personal preparation of the sons of Mosiah as they prepared to teach the gospel:

“They had waxed strong in the knowledge of the truth; for they were men of a sound understanding and they had searched the scriptures diligently, that they might know the word of God.

“But this is not all; they had given themselves to much prayer, and fasting; therefore they had the spirit of prophecy, and the spirit of revelation, and when they taught, they taught with power and authority of God.”¹⁴

Another powerful gospel teacher was Moroni, who was chosen as “a messenger sent from the presence of God”¹⁵ to teach and to tutor the Prophet Joseph Smith. Joseph has given us a brief but detailed

description of what Moroni said and did when he taught Joseph.¹⁶

The first time Moroni appeared to Joseph Smith, Joseph was a teenage boy of 17 with little formal education. Joseph described himself as “an obscure boy . . . of no consequence in the world,”¹⁷ and a friend later called him “untutored” and “untaught.”¹⁸ In the hands of a patient and caring teacher like Moroni—and other heaven-sent messengers who instructed him—this young man would become the central figure in what the Lord referred to as “a marvelous work and a wonder.”¹⁹

Three basic principles of gospel teaching

What are some of the principles of teaching and learning we might identify by observing the way Moroni taught Joseph Smith? There are a number of important principles we could discuss, but let us focus on three basic principles essential to good teaching.

Principle 1: Show love to those you teach and call them by name.

Joseph Smith said that when the angel Moroni first appeared to him, Joseph “was afraid; but the fear soon left” him. What was it that Moroni did to help dispel this fear? Joseph said, “He called me by name.”²⁰ Teachers who love their students and call them by name are following a heavenly pattern.²¹

In a recent meeting with President Thomas S. Monson, I noticed that he greeted each of us by name. He spoke to us about his boyhood Sunday School teacher Lucy Gertsch, noting that she was a teacher who knew the names of each student in her class. President Monson has said of her: “She unfailingly called on those who missed a Sunday or who just didn’t come. We knew she cared about us. None of us has ever forgotten her or the lessons she taught.”²²

Principle 2: Teach from the scriptures.

Another teaching principle practiced by Moroni is that he knew and taught from

the scriptures. Joseph Smith said that at their very first meeting, Moroni “commenced quoting the prophecies of the Old Testament. . . . He quoted many other passages of scripture, and offered many explanations.”²³ From the many scriptures quoted by Moroni, Joseph learned about his prophetic role in the coming forth of the Book of Mormon and the restoration of the true gospel again to the earth.²⁴

Principle 3: Encourage the pondering of gospel truths.

A third principle employed by Moroni in teaching Joseph Smith was to cause him to ponder on what he had been taught. Joseph states that after his third meeting with Moroni, he “was again left to ponder on . . . what [he] had just experienced.”²⁵ Effective teachers will want to follow the pattern of the resurrected Christ among the Nephites when He asked the multitude to return to their “homes, and ponder upon the things” He had taught them so that they might “understand.”²⁶

Nephi reminds us that the act of pondering involves using not only our heads but also our hearts. He said, “My heart pondereth continually upon the things which I have seen and heard.”²⁷ The act of pondering on the scriptures and the things we have seen and heard invites personal revelation to come into our lives.

A teacher come from God

I testify that teaching the gospel is a sacred and holy calling. When you love your students and call them by name, when you open the scriptures and teach from them, and when you encourage your students to ponder the truths of the restored gospel and apply them, then your influence for good will be magnified and the lives of your students will be blessed more abundantly. In that glorious day, they will say to you as it was said of Jesus of Nazareth, “We know that thou art a teacher come from God.”²⁸ In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

1. Boyd K. Packer and L. Tom Perry, "Principles of Teaching and Learning," *Worldwide Leadership Training Meeting*, Feb. 2007; in *Ensign*, June 2007, 82.
2. L. Tom Perry, *Ensign*, June 2007, 84; see also 1 Corinthians 12:28; Ephesians 4:11–14.
3. Boyd K. Packer, *Ensign*, June 2007, 86.
4. See *Worldwide Leadership Training Meeting*, Feb. 2007; in *Ensign*, June 2007, 81–112; proceedings of this meeting are also available at www.lds.org.
5. *Teaching, No Greater Call* (1999).
6. John 20:16; see footnote *a*.
7. Matthew 7:29; see also Mark 1:22.
8. Acts 10:38.
9. John 8:28.
10. John 5:19–20.
11. See 2 Nephi 33:1–13.
12. See Mosiah 27:32–37.
13. See Alma 17:1–12.
14. Alma 17:2–3.
15. Joseph Smith—History 1:33.
16. See Joseph Smith—History 1:27–54.
17. Joseph Smith—History 1:22.
18. Orson Pratt, *Deseret News*, July 21, 1880, 386.
19. 2 Nephi 25:17; 27:26; see also Isaiah 29:14; 3 Nephi 21:9–10.
20. Joseph Smith—History 1:32–33; see also verse 49.
21. See Matthew 3:17; 3 Nephi 11:7; Moroni 2:1–2; Joseph Smith—History 1:17.
22. Thomas S. Monson, "Examples of Great Teachers," *Ensign*, June 2007, 109.
23. Joseph Smith—History 1:36, 41.
24. See Joseph Smith—History 1:33–54; see also Doctrine and Covenants 20:8–9.
25. Joseph Smith—History 1:47.
26. 3 Nephi 17:3; see also Doctrine and Covenants 138:1, 6, 11, 29.
27. 2 Nephi 4:16; see also Moroni 10:3.
28. John 3:2.

President Uchtdorf

Thank you, brethren.

The choir and congregation will now sing "How Firm a Foundation." At the conclusion of the singing, Elders Eduardo Gavarret and Carlos A. Godoy of the Seventy will address us. Following their remarks, we shall hear from Elder Quentin L. Cook of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles.

The choir and congregation sang
"How Firm a Foundation."

Elder Eduardo Gavarret**Warmth at home, warmth at church**

It gets very cold during the winter in my hometown of Minas, Uruguay. At sunset my mother used to place logs in the fireplace in order to keep our dining room warm, and one by one, my parents, sisters, and I would gather together, once our daily chores were done. That cozy room—created by the warmth of the fireplace, combined with the presence of each one of the members of the family—instilled feelings within me that I shall treasure forever.

After my wife and I formed our own family, wherever we were living, we all also gathered often, whether around a fireplace or simply around the warmth we always feel whenever we are reunited with our children. What a beautiful feeling! What a lovely place is our house, our home, our refuge.

Through the years our family has lived in different countries, and in each one of them we were able to find within the Church the same feeling of warmth from members in every ward we attended.

Each member of the Church should have the opportunity to experience such pleasant feelings, and they can experience these feelings through our efforts of re-activation and missionary work.

Members “returning home” in Peru

Let me share with you something that has been happening in some stakes and districts in Peru, and in so doing I will mention some family names: the Causo family, the Banda family, the Vargas family, and the list goes on. It includes over 1,700 names of members who have come home. They are members of different wards, branches, stakes, and districts from all over the country of Peru who were invited by stake presidents, bishops, and leaders of quorums and auxiliary organizations to return home. They accepted the invitation made by priesthood leaders, full-time missionaries, and others who took upon themselves the responsibility to help them return to church and come unto Christ. To each one of them, we say, “Welcome. Welcome home!”

What made it possible for these persons to return home? It was the combined effort of 14 stakes and 4 districts in a mission laboring for one year to bring about the return of all these persons through re-activation and the ordinances of baptism and confirmation.

This effort was inspired by the Savior’s words: “Lovest thou me? . . . Feed my sheep” (John 21:16) and by the teaching of President Thomas S. Monson, who said:

“Over the years we have issued appeals to the less active, the offended, the critical, the transgressor—to come back. ‘Come back and feast at the table of the Lord, and taste again the sweet and satisfying fruits of fellowship with the Saints’” (in Conference Report, Apr. 2008, 88; or *Ensign*, May 2008, 89).

Alma, feeling great suffering for the souls of his brethren, prayed to the Lord, saying:

“O Lord, wilt thou grant unto us that we may have success in bringing them again unto thee in Christ.

“Behold, O Lord, their souls are precious, and many of them are our brethren; therefore, give unto us, O Lord, power and wisdom that we may bring these, our brethren, again unto thee” (Alma 31:34–35).

Dear are the lambs of His fold

President Angel Alarcón from the Puente Piedra stake in Lima, Peru, shared the following experience with me: “Each Saturday, the missionaries, the bishop, some leaders from auxiliary organizations, and I visit less-active members, nonmembers, and new converts from 8:30 a.m. till noon.”

At this point of his story, the words of the hymn came to my mind:

Dear to the heart of the Shepherd,
Dear are the lambs of his fold;
Some from the pastures are straying,
Hungry and helpless and cold.

See, the Good Shepherd is seeking,
Seeking the lambs that are lost,
Bringing them in with rejoicing,
Saved at such infinite cost.
[“Dear to the Heart of the Shepherd,”
Hymns, no. 221]

Brother Vargas, whose home was located in an area of limited access, received a call one Saturday morning. It was President Alarcón, calling from his mobile phone, announcing his arrival. Brother Vargas then said, “I am surprised; it is very hard to reach my house.”

To which came the reply: “Well, I am at your door right now, and I wish to speak to you. We need you, and we invite you to come to our Church meetings tomorrow.”

Then the man, who had stopped attending church for many years, replied, “I will be there.” Thus, he started his journey back home.

“For I was an hungred, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in:

“Naked, and ye clothed me: I was sick, and ye visited me: I was in prison, and ye came unto me. . . .

“ . . . Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me” (Matthew 25:35–36, 40).

Keeping the flame alive

While taking part in Sunday meetings a couple of weeks ago, I had the chance to meet a brother who was attending for the first time after many years of being away. He was accompanied by his wife, who was not a member of the Church.

When I asked him why he decided to return, he replied, “My friend Fernando and this good bishop invited me to come, and I did. I found the Church many years ago, and I have a small flame still burning within my heart. It may not be strong, but it is there.”

I concluded, “Well, as your brethren, we shall blow that flame together to keep it alive.” Then we gave each other a hug.

The interest, attention, and care toward our brethren are profound manifestations of love for our Heavenly Father. In fact, we express our love for God when we serve and when this service is focused on our neighbor’s well-being.

King Benjamin taught about it: “And behold, I tell you these things that ye may learn wisdom; that ye may learn that when ye are in the service of your fellow beings ye are only in the service of your God” (Mosiah 2:17).

What a tremendous impact we can make in the lives of so many less-active families and of those who are not members of the Church when we accept the Savior’s invitation to feed His sheep and help everyone to come unto Christ!

Seek for my lost ones

These experiences are a few of what thousands of brethren are quietly doing: accepting the Lord’s invitation to feed His sheep. Let us remember that love and service are like twins who seek each other’s companionship.

Oh, that each one of us would accept, as a beautiful demonstration of our love for our Heavenly Father, the responsibility we bear as members of this Church to seek after those who are not here with us! If through this loving service we should bring only one soul to the Church and if we would make it the object of our lives, how much rejoicing would we bring upon us and upon those whom we help return to Christ!

Hark! he is earnestly calling,
Tenderly pleading today:
“Will you not seek for my lost ones,
Off from my shelter astray?”
[*Hymns*, no. 221]

I testify that we are sons and daughters of a Heavenly Father, who loves us and who knows each of us by our own name.

I bear my testimony of the love of our Father and Savior. He loved us first and gave His Son so that, through Him, we could be able to come back home. I express my love for Him, my Savior, my Lord, my Master, and my Redeemer, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

Elder Carlos A. Godoy

Testimony as a process

A few years ago, when I was serving as an Area Seventy in Brazil, my family and I were on vacation in the beautiful city of Florianópolis. On Sunday, as usual, we went to the closest church that we could find. My wife and I and our oldest daughter attended a Sunday School class where they were discussing our personal testimony of the gospel.

At some point in the lesson, the teacher asked the class members if they would share a powerful spiritual experience they had while developing their testimony of the Church. While some brothers and sisters were sharing their stories, I mentally reviewed my own experiences as a convert for something I could share with them, but I could not think of anything very remarkable in my process of gaining a testimony.

While I was thinking and listening to the others' experiences, I realized that the teacher expected me to participate. She was listening to the other members, and she let me know that she was waiting for my great experience to be shared. After all, I was an Area Seventy, and I should have something impressive to share. Feeling that the time was passing and she was waiting for me, I tried harder to find something that would fit in this category of a powerful event, but I was not able to think of anything, to the disappointment of the teacher. For all I wanted to help, I could not meet her expectation.

Fortunately that was a fast Sunday, and during sacrament meeting, I took the opportunity to express my testimony to the congregation and especially to that sister and her Sunday School class. It was not a remarkable experience that I had to share but a sincere testimony that I have about the truths of the restored gospel.

The Spirit whispers rather than shouts

Sometimes we think that to have a testimony of the Church, we need some great, powerful experience, or a single event which would erase any doubts that we have received an answer or a confirmation. President Boyd K. Packer taught:

"The voice of the Spirit is described in the scripture as being neither 'loud' nor 'harsh.' It is 'not a voice of thunder, neither [a] voice of a great tumultuous noise.' But rather, 'a still voice of perfect mildness, as if it had been a whisper,' and it can 'pierce even to the very soul' and 'cause [the heart] to burn.' (3 Ne. 11:3; Hel. 5:30; D&C 85:6–7.) Remember, Elijah found the voice of the Lord was not in the wind, nor in the earthquake, nor in the fire, but was a 'still small voice.' (1 Kgs. 19:12.)"

President Packer continues:

"The Spirit does not get our attention by shouting or shaking us with a heavy hand. Rather it whispers. It caresses so gently that if we are preoccupied we may not feel it at all. . . .

"Occasionally it will press just firmly enough for us to pay heed. But most of the time, if we do not heed the gentle feeling, the Spirit will withdraw and wait until we come seeking and listening and say in our manner and expression, like Samuel of ancient times, 'Speak [Lord], for thy servant heareth.' (1 Sam. 3:10.)" ("The Candle of the Lord," *Ensign*, Jan. 1983, 53).

Danger of looking for something great

Great events are not a guarantee that our testimony will be strong. Laman and Lemuel are good examples of this. They were visited by angels, and even then, almost in the very next minute, they were questioning the will of the Lord. Some great leaders of these latter days can also

teach us about this principle. They were taught from on high during the early days of the Restoration and still were not strong enough to endure to the end. These experiences show us that to receive the witness of the “still small voice” sometimes can have a stronger impact on our testimonies than the visit of an angel.

As a young man in Porto Alegre, Brazil, learning about the Church from two sister missionaries, I remember looking for an answer to my prayers—something big and unquestionable. It never happened. That does not mean that I did not develop enough certainty to join the restored Church.

Alma teaches this process of nurturing a testimony: “But behold, if ye will awake and arouse your faculties, even to an experiment upon my words, and exercise a particle of faith, yea, even if ye can no more than desire to believe [and I think that was my case as an investigator], let this desire work in you, even until ye believe in a manner that ye can give place for a portion of my words” (Alma 32:27).

Since those days, for me as an investigator of the Church, and later as a missionary, and then as a father and a leader, all of these experiences together formed a set of experiences and feelings, most often small, that leave no doubt that the seed “is a good seed” (Alma 32:30).

Alma continues his teaching about testimony:

“Now, we will compare the word unto a seed. Now, if ye give place, that a seed may be planted in your heart, behold, if it be a true seed, or a good seed, if ye do not cast it out by your unbelief, that ye will resist the Spirit of the Lord, behold, it will begin to swell within your breasts; and when you feel these swelling motions, ye will begin to say within yourselves—It must needs be that this is a good seed, or that the word is good, for it . . . beginneth to enlighten my understanding, yea,

it beginneth to be delicious to me” (Alma 32:28).

A testimony, then, for some people, may come through a single and irrefutable event. But for others, it may come through a process of experiences that, perhaps not as remarkable but when combined, testify in an indisputable way that what we have learned and lived is true.

A testimony of absolute certainty

Today, after many years as a member of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, I might not be able to remember most of the experiences that have shaped my testimony. Still, all of these experiences have left their mark and contributed to my testimony of the restored Church. Today I have an absolute certainty of the truths of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

I would like to finish expressing this testimony, not only for that sister who taught the Sunday School class but also for all of you. I know that our Heavenly Father lives. I know He loves us. We are His children. He listens to our prayers. I know that Jesus Christ is our Savior. He died, was resurrected, and atoned for our sins. His Atonement has blessed me every day of my life.

I testify that the Church of Jesus Christ was restored in these latter days by the Prophet Joseph Smith. He was a prophet of God. I know that we are led today by a living prophet, President Thomas S. Monson. I know he is a prophet for our days, just as Moses, Abraham, and Isaiah were in their days.

The Book of Mormon is the word of God, as well as the Bible, and it is another testimony of the Savior. I know that the power of the priesthood was restored and has been blessing many Saints throughout the world. And I testify of this in the sacred name of Jesus Christ, amen.

Elder Quentin L. Cook

“Hope ya know, we had a hard time”

Last winter my daughter had a white-knuckle experience driving in a severe snowstorm. She reminded me of a similar situation I had with my two sons many years ago. My youngest son, Joe, was three years old, and my son Larry was six. We were traveling by car from San Francisco to Utah in June. The weather had been very good.

As we started our ascent to the Donner Pass summit in the Sierra Nevada Mountains, suddenly and without warning an enormous snowstorm hit us. None of the drivers was prepared. A semitruck in front of us had jackknifed and was spread across two lanes. Other trucks and cars had slid off the freeway. One lane was open, and many vehicles, including ours, were desperately trying to gain traction to avoid the other vehicles. All traffic then came to a halt.

We were not prepared for this blizzard in June. We had no warm clothing, and our fuel was relatively low. I huddled with the two boys in an effort to keep us warm. After many hours, safety vehicles, snowplows, and tow trucks began to clear up the massive logjam of vehicles.

Eventually a tow truck hauled us to a service station on the other side of the pass. I called my wife, knowing she would be worried because she had expected a call the prior evening. She asked if she could speak to the two boys. When it was the three-year-old's turn, with a quivering voice he said, “Hope ya know, we had a hard time!”

I could tell, as our three-year-old talked to his mother and told her of the hard time, he gained comfort and then reassurance. Our prayers are that way when we go to our Father in Heaven. We know He cares for us in our time of need.

Each of us will face trials and hardships

The incident I just recounted, while a difficult travel situation, was brief, and there were no lasting consequences. However, many of the trials and hardships we encounter in life are severe and appear to have lasting consequences. Each of us will experience some of these during the vicissitudes of life. Many listening to this conference are experiencing situations of a most serious nature at this very moment.

We resonate with the Prophet Joseph's petition after he had been falsely accused and imprisoned in Liberty Jail for months: “O God, where art thou? And where is the pavilion that covereth thy hiding place?”

The Lord's answer is reassuring: “My son, peace be unto thy soul; thine adversity and thine afflictions shall be but a small moment; and then, if thou endure it well, God shall exalt thee on high.”¹

One of the essential doctrines illuminated by the Restoration is that there must be opposition in all things for righteousness to be brought to pass.² This life is not always easy, nor was it meant to be; it is a time of testing and proving. As we read in Abraham, “And we will prove them herewith, to see if they will do all things whatsoever the Lord their God shall command them.”³ Elder Harold B. Lee taught:

“Sometimes the things that are best for us and the things that bring eternal rewards seem at the moment to be the most bitter, and the things forbidden are oftentimes the things which seem to be the more desirable.”⁴

The novel *A Tale of Two Cities* opens with the oft-quoted line “It was the best of times, it was the worst of times.”⁵ The scriptures make it clear that each generation has its own version of best and worst of times. We are all subject to the conflict between good and evil⁶ and the contrast

between light and dark, hope and despair. As Elder Neal A. Maxwell explained, “The sharp, side-by-side contrast of the sweet and the bitter is essential until the very end of this brief, mortal experience.”⁷ We know from our doctrine that good will overcome evil,⁸ and those who repent and are sanctified shall be given eternal life.⁹

Trials of the early Saints

Near the time Dickens was writing his novel, the heroic efforts of the early Saints who settled the Intermountain West were occurring.

Even with their common faith, the Saints had experienced much hardship and approached the evacuation of Nauvoo with very different expectations. Some looked forward with optimism, others with concern. Two excellent examples are presented by Helen Mar Whitney and Bathsheba Smith. Both have left compelling records of their feelings.

Sister Whitney recorded her expectations upon leaving Nauvoo: “I will pack away all my little ribbons, collars and laces, etc., for we are going where we cannot purchase them. We are going out from the world to live beyond the Rocky Mountains where none others will wish to go. . . . There will be neither rich nor poor among us, and we will have none but the honest and virtuous.”¹⁰ Sister Whitney’s words resonate with an idealistic optimism.

Sister Bathsheba Smith’s recorded feelings are also full of faith but evidence some trepidation. She had seen the mobs arrayed against the Saints in Missouri and was present at the death of the Apostle David W. Patten. Recalling the evacuation of Nauvoo, she wrote:

“My last act in that precious spot was to tidy the rooms, sweep up the floor and set the broom in its accustomed place behind the door. Then with emotions in my heart . . . I gently closed the door and faced an unknown future, . . . faced it with faith in God and with no less assurance of the ultimate establishment of the Gospel

in the West and of its true enduring principles, than I had felt in those trying scenes in Missouri.”¹¹

Both of these LDS pioneer women remained strong in the gospel throughout their lives and provided wonderful service in building Zion, but they faced many additional trials and hardships, which they both faithfully endured.¹² Despite Sister Whitney’s optimism, her first three children died at or near birth—two of them during her extended exodus from Nauvoo to Salt Lake.¹³ Sister Whitney has blessed us with her writings in defense of our faith and was the mother of the Apostle Orson F. Whitney.

Sister Smith recorded the poverty, sickness, and privation the Saints suffered as they made their way west.¹⁴ In March of 1847 her mother passed away, and the next month her second son, John, was born. Her record of that is brief: “He was my last child, and lived only four hours.”¹⁵ Later in her life she was the matron of the Salt Lake Temple and the fourth general president of the Relief Society.

We are deeply touched by the hardships the early Saints endured. Brigham Young captured this somewhat humorously in February 1856 when he stated:

“I might say something with regard to the hard times. You know that I have told you that if any one was afraid of starving to death, let him leave, and go where there is plenty. I do not apprehend the least danger of starving, for until we eat up the last mule, from the tip of the ear to the end of the fly whipper, I am not afraid of starving to death.”

He went on to say, “There are many people who cannot now get employment, but the spring is going to open upon us soon, and we are not going to suffer any more than what is for our good.”¹⁶

Challenges of today

The challenges we face today are in their own way comparable to challenges of the past. The recent economic crisis

has caused significant concern throughout the world. Employment and financial problems are not unusual. Many people have physical and mental health challenges. Others deal with marital problems or wayward children. Some have lost loved ones. Addictions and inappropriate or harmful propensities cause heartache. Whatever the source of the trials, they cause significant pain and suffering for individuals and those who love them.

We know from the scriptures that some trials are for our good and are suited for our own personal development.¹⁷ We also know that the rain falls on the just and the unjust.¹⁸ It is also true that every cloud we see doesn't result in rain. Regardless of the challenges, trials, and hardships we endure, the reassuring doctrine of the Atonement wrought by Jesus Christ includes Alma's teaching that the Savior would take upon Him our infirmities and "succor his people according to their infirmities."¹⁹

Be prepared, grateful

The scriptures and modern prophets have made it clear that there will be lean years and plentiful years.²⁰ The Lord expects us to be prepared for many of the challenges that come. He proclaims, "If ye are prepared ye shall not fear."²¹ Part of the trauma I experienced crossing the Sierras in that blizzard many years ago occurred because I was not prepared for this sudden, unexpected event. One of the great blessings of the scriptures is that they warn us of challenges that are unexpected but often occur. We would do well to be prepared for them. One form of preparation is to keep the commandments.

In numerous places in the Book of Mormon, the people were promised that they would prosper in the land if they would keep the commandments.²² This promise is often accompanied by the warning that if they do not keep the commandments of God, they shall be cut off from His presence.²³ Clearly, having the

blessings of the Spirit—the ministration of the Holy Ghost—is an essential element to truly prosper in the land and to be prepared.

Regardless of our trials, with the abundance we have today, we would be ungrateful if we did not appreciate our blessings. Despite the obvious nature of the hardships the pioneers were experiencing, President Brigham Young talked about the significance of gratitude. He stated, "I do not know of any, excepting the unpardonable sin, that is greater than the sin of ingratitude."²⁴

Gratitude for the Savior and His Atonement

Our foremost gratitude should be for the Savior and His Atonement. We are aware that many who are listening to this conference are experiencing trials and hardships of such intensity that the underlying feeling in their hearts as they approach our Father in Heaven in prayer is "Hope ya know, I'm having a hard time."

Let me share with you the true account of one sister, Ellen Yates from Grantsville, Utah. Early in October, 10 years ago, she kissed her husband, Leon, good-bye as he left to go to work in Salt Lake City. This would be the last time she would see Leon alive. He had a collision with a young man 20 years of age who was late for his first job and had tried to pass a slower vehicle, resulting in a head-on collision that killed them both instantly. Sister Yates said that after two compassionate highway patrolmen told her the news, she plunged into shock and grief.

She records, "As I tried to look ahead in life, all I could see was darkness and pain." It turned out that her husband's best friend was the bishop of the young man's ward. The bishop called Sister Yates and told her that the young man's mother, Jolayne Willmore, wanted to talk with her. She remembers "being shocked because I was so centered on my grief and

pain that I had not even thought about the young man and his family. I suddenly realized that here was a mother who was in as much or more pain than I was. I quickly gave my permission . . . for a visit.”

When Brother and Sister Willmore arrived, they expressed their great sorrow that their son was responsible for Leon’s death and presented her with a picture of the Savior holding a little girl in His arms. Sister Yates says, “When times become too hard to bear, I look at this picture and remember that Christ knows me personally. He knows my loneliness and my trials.” One scripture that comforts Sister Yates is “Wherefore, be of good cheer, and do not fear, for I the Lord am with you, and will stand by you.”²⁵

Each October, Sister Yates and Sister Willmore (both of whom are here together in the Conference Center today) go to the temple together and offer thanks for the Atonement of Jesus Christ, for the plan of salvation, for eternal families, and for the covenants that bind together husbands and wives and families on both sides of the veil. Sister Yates concludes, “Through this trial, I have felt the love of my Father in Heaven and my Savior in greater abundance than I had ever felt before.” She testifies that “there is no grief, no pain, no sickness so great that the Atonement of Christ and the love of Christ cannot heal.”²⁶ What a wonderful example of love and forgiveness these two sisters have demonstrated. It has allowed the Atonement of Jesus Christ to be efficacious in their lives.

Think of the Savior in the Garden of Gethsemane during the Atonement process, suffering agony so great that He bled from every pore.²⁷ His cry to His Father included the word *Abba*.²⁸ This might be interpreted as the cry of a son who is in distress to his father: “O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt.”²⁹

I testify that the Atonement of Jesus Christ covers all of the trials and hardships that any of us will encounter in this life. At times when we may feel to say, “Hope you know, I had a hard time,” we can be assured that He is there and we are safe in His loving arms.

When our beloved prophet, President Thomas S. Monson, was asked on his birthday this past August what would be the ideal gift that members worldwide could give him, he said without a moment’s hesitation, “Find someone who is having a hard time, . . . and do something for them.”³⁰

I, with you, am eternally grateful to Jesus Christ, the rescuer of mankind. I bear witness that He is the Savior and Redeemer of the world. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

1. Doctrine and Covenants 121:1, 7–8.
2. See 2 Nephi 2:11.
3. Abraham 3:25.
4. Harold B. Lee, *The Fall of Man* (address delivered at a meeting for seminary and institute teachers, June 23, 1954).
5. Charles Dickens, *A Tale of Two Cities* (Signet Classic, 1997), 13.
6. See 2 Nephi 2:15–16.
7. Neal A. Maxwell, “Enduring Well,” *Ensign*, Apr. 1997, 7.
8. See Doctrine and Covenants 19:2–3; 133:64.
9. See Doctrine and Covenants 133:62; 14:7; John 17:3.
10. *A Woman’s View: Helen Mar Whitney’s Reminiscences of Early Church History*, ed. Jeni Broberg Holzapfel and Richard Neitzel Holzapfel (1997), 329–30.
11. Bathsheba W. Smith, *Autobiography*, ed. Alice Merrill Horne, typescript, 15, as quoted in Maurine Jensen Proctor and Scot Facer Proctor, photo essay, “Joseph, Joseph, Joseph: The Temple Has Returned to Nauvoo, Part 4, ‘Lift Up Thine Eyes,’” *Meridian Magazine*, 2002, <http://www.meridianmagazine.com/photoessay/020522nauvoo/020522nauvoo3.html>.

12. See Ether 12:6.
13. See *A Woman's View*, 491.
14. See Heidi Swinton, "I Gently Closed the Door," in *Heroines of the Restoration*, ed. Barbara B. Smith and Blythe Darlyn Thatcher (1997), 134.
15. Bathsheba W. Smith, in *Heroines of the Restoration*, 134.
16. *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Brigham Young* (Melchizedek Priesthood and Relief Society course of study, 1997), 177.
17. See Doctrine and Covenants 122:7.
18. See Matthew 5:45.
19. Alma 7:12.
20. See Genesis 41:29–31; Gordon B. Hinckley, in Conference Report, Oct. 1998, 70; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1998, 53.
21. Doctrine and Covenants 38:30.
22. See 2 Nephi 4:4.
23. See Alma 36:30.
24. *Teachings: Brigham Young*, 177.
25. Doctrine and Covenants 68:6.
26. Ellen Yates, personal account delivered at the Grantsville Utah Stake conference, Saturday evening session, Feb. 16, 2008.
27. See Doctrine and Covenants 19:18.
28. See Mark 14:36.
29. Matthew 26:39.
30. Thomas S. Monson, quoted in Gerry Avant, "Prophet's Birthday: Milestone of 81," *Church News*, Aug. 23, 2008, 4.

President Uchtdorf

Thank you, brethren.

As we conclude the conference, we express appreciation to the Tabernacle Choir; the Primary choir from Kaysville and Fruit Heights, Utah; and the priesthood choir from the Provo Missionary Training Center and their conductors and organists for the beautiful and inspiring music. We also extend thanks to all who have participated in any way in the conference sessions.

Our concluding speaker at this session will be President Thomas S. Monson, our beloved prophet. Following President Monson's remarks, the choir will sing "We Ever Pray for Thee." The benediction will then be offered by Elder Marcus B. Nash of the Seventy, and the conference will be adjourned.

President Thomas S. Monson

Study and ponder conference messages

Brothers and sisters, I know you will agree with me that this has been a most inspiring conference. We have felt the Spirit of the Lord in rich abundance these past two days as our hearts have been touched and our testimonies of this divine work have been strengthened. I am certain I represent the membership of the Church everywhere in expressing appreciation to the brethren and sisters who have addressed us. I am reminded of the words of Moroni found in the Book of Mormon:

"And their meetings were conducted by the church after the manner of the workings of the Spirit, and by the power

of the Holy Ghost; for as the power of the Holy Ghost led them whether to preach, or to exhort, or to pray, or to supplicate, or to sing, even so it was done."¹

May we long remember what we have heard during this general conference. The messages which have been given will be printed in next month's *Ensign* and *Liahona* magazines. I urge you to study them and to ponder their teachings.

To you brethren who have been released at this conference, we express our deep appreciation for your many years of dedicated service. The entire membership of the Church has benefited from your countless contributions.

I assure you that our Heavenly Father is mindful of the challenges we face in the world today. He loves each of us and will bless us as we strive to keep His commandments and seek Him through prayer.

Reach out to others

We are a global church, brothers and sisters. Our membership is found throughout the world. May we be good citizens of the nations in which we live and good neighbors in our communities, reaching out to those of other faiths, as well as to our own. May we be men and women of honesty and integrity in everything we do.

There are those throughout the world who are hungry; there are those who are destitute. Working together, we can alleviate suffering and provide for those in need. In addition to the service you give as you care for one another, your contributions to the funds of the Church enable us to respond almost immediately when disasters occur anywhere in the world. We are nearly always among the first on the scene to provide whatever assistance we can. We thank you for your generosity.

There are other difficulties in the lives of some. Particularly among the young, there are those who are tragically involved in such things as drugs, immorality, gangs, and all the serious problems that go with them. In addition, there are those who are lonely, including widows and widowers, who long for the company and the concern of others. May we ever be mindful of the needs of those around us and be ready to extend a helping hand and a loving heart.

Eternal life—our most precious goal

Brothers and sisters, how blessed we are that the heavens are indeed open, that the restored Church of Jesus Christ is upon the earth today, and that the Church is founded upon the rock of revelation.

We know that continuous revelation is the very lifeblood of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

May each of us go safely to our homes. May we live together in peace and harmony and love. May we strive each day to follow the Savior's example.

God bless you, my brothers and sisters. I thank you for your prayers in my behalf and in behalf of all the General Authorities. We are deeply grateful for you.

In one of Christopher Marlowe's plays, *The Tragical History of Dr. Faustus*, there is portrayed an individual, Dr. Faustus, who chose to ignore God and follow the pathway of Satan. At the end of his wicked life, and facing the frustration of opportunities lost and punishment certain to come, he lamented, "[There is] more searing anguish than [flaming] fire—eternal exile from God."²

My brothers and sisters, just as eternal exile from God may be the most searing anguish, so eternal life in the presence of God is our most precious goal.

With all my heart and soul I pray that we might continue to persevere in the pursuit of this most precious prize.

I bear witness to you that this work is true, that our Savior lives, and that He guides and directs His Church here upon the earth. I bid you farewell, my dear brothers and sisters, until we meet again in six months. In the name of Jesus of Nazareth, our Savior, our Redeemer whom we serve, amen.

NOTES

1. Moroni 6:9.
2. See "Deviled Marlowe," *Time*, Oct. 16, 1964, 77.

The choir sang "We Ever Pray for Thee."

Elder Marcus B. Nash offered the benediction.

SUMMARY OF CONFERENCE MUSIC

The Tabernacle Choir provided the music for the Saturday morning, Sunday morning, and Sunday afternoon sessions. Mack Wilberg and Ed Thompson directed the choir. Clay Christiansen, Andrew Unsworth, Bonnie Goodliffe, and Linda Margetts were the organists.

A Primary choir from Kaysville and Fruit Heights, Utah, provided music for the Saturday afternoon session. Colleen Paddock directed the choir, and Linda Margetts was the organist.

A priesthood choir from the Provo Missionary Training Center provided the music for the priesthood session. Douglas Brechley conducted the choir, and Clay Christiansen was the organist.

Throughout the conference sessions, prelude, postlude, and interlude music and accompaniments on the organ were played by Clay Christiansen, Andrew Unsworth, Linda Margetts, and Bonnie Goodliffe.

Brook P. Hales

Clerk of the Conference

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